

~~THE CALUMNIES UPON THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIANS ACCOUNTED FOR. OR, AN ENQUIRY INTO THE GROUNDS, AND CAUSES OF THE CHARGE OF INCEST, INFANTICIDE, ATHEISM, ONOLATRIA, OR AFS-WORSHIP, SEDITION, &c. LAID AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS, IN THE THREE FIRST CENTURIES.~~

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THE  
CALUMNIES

UPON THE  
Primitive Christians  
Accounted for.

OR, AN  
ENQUIRY

Into the  
Grounds, and Causes of the Charge  
of Incest, Infanticide, Atheism, Ono-  
latria, or Afs-Worship, Sedition, &c.  
laid against the Christians, in the three  
first Centuries.

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By ROB. TURNER, M. A.  
Vicar of St. Peter's in Colchester.

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L O N D O N :

Printed by M. J. for J. and J. BONWICKE, at the  
Red Lion in St. Paul's-Church-Yard. 1727.



The Right Reverend Father in God

CALAMITIES

UPON THE

Primitive Christians

Accounted for.

This Attempt to account for

O. R. A. N.

the Calamities upon the Primitive

ENQUIRY

Is humbly offered.

Grounds and Causes of the Charge  
of Incest, Inanimitas, Avarice, Ono-  
latria, or Ais Worshipping, Sc.  
laid against the Christians in the three  
first Centuries.

Dutiful and Obedient Servant

By ROB. TURNER, M. A.

Vicar of St. Peter's in Colchester.

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T O  
The Right Reverend Father in God

EDMUND  
Lord Bishop of  
LONDON,

This Attempt to account for  
the Calumnies upon the Primitive  
Christians

Is humbly offer'd,

By

His LORDSHIP'S

Dutiful and Obedient Servant,

ROB. TURNER.

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD

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W

His Lordship's

Dutiful and Obedient Servant,  
General Secretary of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

CHAP. III.

ROB. TURNER.

CHAP.





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## INTRODUCTION.

**I**N the following sheets, I have endeavour'd to give some account, of the rise and progress, the grounds and occasions, of those various calumnies upon the Primitive Christians. An attempt of this nature must, I am sensible, be very imperfect, though manag'd by a learned hand, and with the utmost dexterity, and care: because, though the learned Apologists have, with irresistible reasoning, eternally silenc'd all those cavils, and exceptions against the first Christians; yet they do not always mention the causes, that gave birth to those calumnies. Being therefore frequently destitute of authorities, I am oblig'd to have recourse to conjecture, and probability.

That the best of men shou'd be charg'd with the foulest of crimes, and the most innocent behaviour give the greatest offence. That professing the Christian religion, the best natur'd, and peace-

B

able

able Institution, the world was ever acquainted with, shou'd expose men to contempt, and ridicule, and to all the barbarous outrages, that hellish cruelty cou'd invent, is something very surprizing. And it will add to the wonder when we observe, for how long a time, those excellent Christians labour'd under those scandalous imputations. When innocence is now a days injur'd, and defam'd, it generally recovers its reputation, and esteem in a short time. An evil report seldom lasts long, unless it has some foundation, either in fact, or probability. But it was the hard fate of the Primitive Christians, for a great many Years together, to be charg'd with crimes, that their enemies only were guilty of. The calumnies seem to have commenc'd with Christianity it self, and to have continu'd above two hundred Years.

*Tertullian* mentions the charge of Incest and Infanticide, as of a long standing (a); and justly reproves the infidels, for bringing in so long a time, no better evidence than common Fame.

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(a) Quod aliud negotium patitur Christianus, nisi suæ sectæ? quam incæstam, quam crudelem, tanto tempore nemo probavit. ad scapulam. *cap. 4.* Merito igitur Fama tamdiu sola conscia est scelerum Christianorum. Hanc indicem adversus nos profertis, quæ quod aliquando iactavit, tantoque Spatio in Opinionem corroboravit, usque adhuc probare non valuit. *Apol. cap. 8.*

*Justin*



## The INTRODUCTION. 3

*Justin Martyr* is the first, that expressly tells us, the Christians were charg'd with those crimes, in an Apology presented to the Emperor *Antoninus Pius*, in behalf of the persecuted Christians, A. D. 139, or 140. 'Tis said, I own, in the same Apology, that it was then 150 years since the Birth of our Saviour: But this must be a mistake of the transcriber (b). For *Antoninus's* Edict in favour of the Christians, was occasion'd by *Justin's* Apology; and by the intercession of some Christians in *Asia*. The Edict was therefore posterior in point of time, to *Justin's* Apology: And since the Edict bears date (c), in the third Consulate of *Antoninus*, A. D. 140, the Apology must be written, at the lowest, in the same year. But those calumnies prevail'd before *Justin* was a Christian; for he tells us (d), whilst he was a Philosopher of *Plato's* school, he us'd to wonder, how it came to pass, that the Christians shou'd be accus'd of indulging themselves in all manner of abominable, and unlawful pleasures, and yet at the same time suffer, with the utmost chearfulness, and intrepidity, the most inhuman tortures, and even death it self; by which they were effectually depriv'd of all temporal pleasures, and enjoyments.

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(b) Vide *Cæsar. Hist. Lit. de Justin. Mart.*

(c) Vide *Just. Apol. 1. p. 135. Grab. Edit.*

(d) *Apol. 2. cap. 12. Grab. Edit.*

The famous Apologies of *Quadratus*, and *Aristides*, extant in the times of *Eusebius*, and *St. Jerome*, being now lost, we are in the dark, as to the reign of the Emperor *Adrian*.

*Pliny* having inquir'd into the character, and behaviour of the Christians, in his letter to *Trajan*, ingenuously owns; that excepting their obstinate refusal to sacrifice, he found nothing criminal amongst them. But though he clears them from any imputation of guilt, yet what he says implies, that they had been violently suspected, and openly accused (e). Some of them he examin'd by Tortures; which wou'd scarce have been done, unless he had entertain'd some suspicion of guilt.

*Melito* of *Sardis*, an Apologist for the Christians, *A. D.* 170, lays the foundation of those lying accusations, in the reigns of *Nero*, and *Domitian* (f). And *Tacitus*, speaking of *Nero's* cruelty towards the Christians, tells us, they were *per flagitia invisos*, hated for their wicked, and scandalous behaviour (g).

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(e) *Nomen ipsum, etiamsi flagitiis careat, an flagitia coherentia nomini puniantur. ——— Propositus est libellus sine auctore, multorum nomina continens. ——— Quo magis necessarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur, quid esset veri & per tormenta quærere. Sed nihil aliud inveni, quam superstitionem pravam & immodicam. Plin. Epist. L. 10. Epist. 97.*

(f) *ἀπ' ὧν καὶ τὰς συκοφαντίας ἀλόγως συνδέσκειται τὸς τοῖς ἑσπέραις συμβέβηκε ἱερόδος. Euseb. L. 4. c. 26.*

(g) *Haud perinde in crimine incendii, quam odio humani generis convicti sunt. Annal. L. 15.*

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St. Peter, in his first Epistle, suppos'd to be written about the beginning of Nero's reign, seems to allude to those accusations against the Christians, as prevailing in those times. *Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul: having your conversation honest (or chaste and temperate, for the word καλῶν includes every thing that is commendable) among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil doers (as being guilty of most filthy, and incestuous Lusts) they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (h).* But it will still appear more probable, that St. Peter had an eye to those very calumnies, that are mention'd by the Apologists afterwards; if we consider what Justin Martyr, a most unexceptionable witness, at a very little distance from the Apostolick age (i), tells us in his dialogue with Trypho. The Jews, he says, after our Lord's Resurrection, and Ascension, were so far from repenting of what they had done to the Lord of life, that they sent chosen men from Jerusalem; into all parts of the world, who reported wherever they came, that there was sprung up a wicked and

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(h) 1 Pet. 2. 11, 12. c. 3. 16. c. 4. 4. As concerning this Sect, we know that it is every where spoken against, Aēt. 28. 22.

(i) Μετ' ἑποχῶν τῶν Ἀποστόλων. Euseb. L. 2. cap. 13.



## 6 The INTRODUCTION.

atheistical sect of Christians, *accusing us of those very things, which the infidels at present ignorantly charge us with (k)*. By which it appears, that the charge of infanticide, incest, and atheism, is as old as Christianity it self.

For how many years those excellent Christians were persecuted, by the slanderous tongues of bigotted Jews, and idolatrous Pagans, I cannot precisely determine. About two hundred years after our Lord's Ascension, we find (l), the same aspersions cast upon the Christians, that were broach'd by the Jews, in the infancy of Christianity, and by them propagated all over the world, with most internal malice, and indefatigable industry. But 'tis probable, those original calumnies were dropped, and laid aside, about the middle of the third century; because succeeding writers take no notice of them, even when they give a particular account of fresh accusations, brought against the Christians of their own times (m).

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(k) Καταλέγοντες ταῦτα, ἅπερ καὶ ἡμῶν οἱ ἀγνοῦντες ἡμᾶς πάντες λέγουσιν. \* *Dial. cum Tryph. p. 235. vid. pag. 335. Origen. contra Cels. L. 6. p. 293. Cantab. Edit. Censuræ istius disciplinæ, ut jam edidimus, a Tiberio est, cum odio sui caput simul veritas, atque apparuit inimica esse. Tertull. Apol. cap. 7.*

(l) Vide Origen. *cont. Cels. Min. Fel.*

(m) Vide Cyprian, *ad Demetrianum. Arnob. Laſtant.*

Since

## The INTRODUCTION. 7

Since in all persecutions there is a pretence of guilt, and some suppos'd, imaginary crimes; we may reasonably conclude, that persecutions of all kinds ceas'd at the same time: and that when the Pagans came to be better acquainted with the Christians, they spar'd both their lives, and their reputations. This however is certain, that in the beginning of the fourth Century, those infamous Stories, and senseless cavils almost entirely ceas'd; and truth, and innocence, by the blessing of God, mightily prevail'd.

B 4

CHAP.



## CHAP. I.

### *What Crimes the Primitive Christians were accus'd of.*

**T**Here was scarce any vice or folly, that human nature under a state of the greatest corruption, is capable of committing, but was imputed to the Primitive Christians. They were represented as Enemies to God, and man (*a*), to every thing that was Sacred, vertuous, and commendable. The best of their Actions, which merited the greatest applause; and will meet with a glorious reward, from the righteous Judge of all mankind, expos'd them to infamy, and contempt, to dangers, and cruelty. The greatest innocence was then the greatest crime, and they were suspected to be guilty of the vilest actions, only because they were the best of men.

I. One of the heaviest accusations they labour'd under, was that of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts. They were charg'd with a community of

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(*a*) Christianum hominem omnium scelerum reum, Deorum, Imperatorum, Legum, Morum, naturæ totius inimicum existimas. *Tertull. Apol.*



## The Crimes charg'd, &c. 9

Wives; and of having a criminal, and unnatural commerce, with their own mothers, and sisters (b). Their feasts of charity, kept with the strictest, and most religious sobriety, were tax'd with abominable lewdness, and debauchery. After supper when they were heated, and grown wanton with a luxurious diet, the candles were put out (as the pagans reported it) and every man enjoy'd the woman, he accidentally met with (c).

(b) — Φασκόντων ὡς κοινὰς ἀπάντων ἔσας τὰς γυναῖκας ἡμῶν, καὶ διαφόρῳ μίξει ζυγόντας, ἑπ' μὴν καὶ ταῖς ἰδίαις ἀδελφοαῖς συμμίγνυσθαι. *Theoph. at Autolyc. L. 3. vide Justin. Mart. Apol. 1, 2. Athenag. Legat. p. 4. Iren. L. 1. cap. 24. Clem. Alex. L. 3. Strom. Oxon Edit. p. 511. Origen. contra Cels. L. 6. p. 293, 302. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 4. cap. 7. L. 5. cap. 1.*

(c) — Μετὰ τὴν εἰλαπίνην συνεβέννυτες τὲς λύχνους, ἀδέσμοις μίξεσιν ἐγκυλιόμεθα. *Iust. Mart. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 227.*

Et de convivio notum est. Passim omnes loquuntur. Id etiam cirtensis nostri testatur oratio. Ad epulas solemniter die coeunt, cum omnibus liberis, sororibus, matribus, sexus omnis homines, et omnis ætatis. Illic post multas Epulas, ubi convivium caluit, et incestæ libidinis fervor exarsit, canis qui candelabro nexus est, jactu offulæ ultra spatium lineæ, qua vincitus est, ad imperum et saltum provocatur. Sic everso & extincto conscio lumine, impudentibus tenebris nexus infandæ cupiditatis involvunt, per incertum sortis: & si non omnes opera, conscientia tamen pariter incesti; quoniam voto universorum appetitur, quicquid accidere potest in actu singulorum. *Min. Fel. vide Tertull. Apol. cap. 1. 2. 7. ad Scapulam, cap. 4. ad Uxorem, L. 2. cap. 4.*

II. They were charg'd with Infanticide, with murdering of Infants, and eating them. A very young sucking infant was brought, cover'd over with paste, lest any one shou'd be shock'd at the intended barbarity. The child was prick'd all over with pins, or bodkins; and as soon as it was dead, they cut the body in pieces, and ate it. They drank the blood, and mutually engag'd not to divulge their sacred mysteries. This was said to be the Christians method of initiation (d).

III. They were accus'd of Atheism (e).

(d) Dicimur sceleratissimi de sacramento infanticidii, & pabulo inde, & post convivium incesto. *Tertul. Apol. cap. 7. ad Scapulam. cap. 4.* Jam de initiandis tirunculis fabula tam detestanda, quam nota est. Infans farre contextus, ut decipiat incautos, apponitur ei qui sacris imbuitur: is infans a tirunculo farris superficie, quasi ad innoxios ictus provocato, cæcis occultisque vulneribus occiditur: hujus, proh Nefas! Sicienter sanguinem lambunt, hujus certatim membra dispertiant, hac fæderantur hostia, hac conscientia sceleris ad silentium mutuum pignerantur, hæc sacra sacrilegiis omnibus retriora. *Min. Felix. Vide Tatian. Assyr. contra Græcos. Theoph. ad Autolyc. L. 3. Athenag. Legat. pro Christianis. p. 4. Justin. Mart. Apol. 1, & 2. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 227. Origen. contra Cels. L. 6. p. 293. p. 302. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 4. cap. 7. L. 5. cap. 1. Hieron. ad Marcellam adv. Montanum.*

(e) ——— Ἐνθὲν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοι κακλήμεθα. *Just. Mart. Apol. 1.*

Τρία ἐπισημίζουσιν ἡμῖν ἐγκλήματα, Ἀθεότητα, Συέσιμα δόγματα, Οἰδιποδοίεσι μίξεις. *Athenag. Legat. p. 4.*

Ἄγεις τὰς ἀθέους. *Eccles. Smyrn. de Polycarp. Mart. cap. 9. vide Euseb. L. 4. cap. 15. Tertull. Apol. cap 10. Min. Fel. Arnob. p. 16, 21, & 16.*

## the Primitive Christians. II

IV. Of worshipping the head of an Ass (f).

V. Of Sedition, and being enemies to *Cæsar* (g).

VI. They were represented as very ignorant, and unlearned: as the scum and refuse of the people (h).

VII. They were charg'd with practising of magick arts (i).

(f) Nam ut quidam somniaſtis, caput aſinum eſſe Deum noſtrum. *Tertull. Apol. cap. 16.* Sed nova jam Dei noſtri in iſta civitate proxime editio publica ta eſt, ex quo quidem in fruſtrandis beſtiis mercenarius noxiuſ picturam propoſuit cum ejuſmodi inſcriptione, Deus Chriſtianorum *Ononychites*. Iſ erat auribus aſininis, altero pede ungulatus, librum geſtans, & togatus. *cap. 16.* Audio eos turpiſſimæ pecudis caput aſini conſecratum inepta neſcio qua perſuaſione venerari. Digna & nata religio talibus moribus. *Min. Fel.*

(g) Circa Majeſtatem Imperatoris infamamur. *Tertull. ad Scap. cap. 2.* Publici hoſtes Chriſtiani. *Apol. cap. 35.* vide *cap. 29.* & ſequent. vide *Origen. contra Celſ. L. 1. Min. Fel.*

(h) Qui de ultima fæce collectis imperitioribus, & mulieribus credulis ſexus ſui facilitate labentibus, plebem profanæ conjurationis inſtituunt. *Min. Fel. p. 71.* maxime indoctis, impolitſ, rudibus, agreſtibus, quibus non eſt datum intelligere civilia, multo magis denegarum eſt diſſerere divina. *Ibid. p. 112.* Μόνες ἡλιθίους, καὶ ἀγενεῖς, καὶ ἀναιδήτους, καὶ ἀνδράποδα, καὶ γυναῖκα, καὶ παιδάκια, πείθειν ἐθέλειν τὸς διδάσκοντας τὸν θεῖον λόγον. *Origen. contra Celſ. L. 3. p. 141.* vide p. 121, 137, 144. Nam interdum iſti muliebrem, aut anilem ſuperſtitionem vocant. *Lactan. L. 5. c. 13.* Audeant inquam diſputare nobiſcum aliquid ejuſmodi. Jam proſecto ab aniculis quas contemnunt, & a pueris noſtratibus error illorum ac ſtultitia irridetur. *Ibid. c. 19.* Vide *Arnob. p. 15, 45, 51, 66, 109.* *varior. Edit.*

(i) Μετὰ ταῦτα, ἐκ οἷα πόθεν κινέμενος, ὁ Κέλσος φησὶ, δαιμόνων πνῶν ἀνόμασι, καὶ κατακλήσει δοκεῖν ἰσχύειν Χριſτιανούς. *Origen. contra Celſ. L. 1. p. 7, 30. L. 6. p. 302. Euseb. H. E. L. 3. cap. 26.*

VIII.



## 12 *The Crimes charg'd upon*

VIII. The various and clashing opinions amongst the Christians, was made an objection against them, and their Religion (*k*).

IX. They were charg'd with corrupting, and interpolating the Sibyllin oracles (*l*).

X. They were said to worship a cross (*m*).

XI. To worship the sun (*n*).

XII. They were said to be the cause of all the signal calamities that befell mankind (*o*).

(*k*) Επειδὴ δὴ ἀκόλαστον ἐστὶ πρὸς τὰ ὑπὸ Ελλήνων, καὶ Ἰουδαίων ἐπιφερόμενα ἡμῖν ἐγκλήματα ἀπολογησάμεθα. — πρῶτον μὲν ἐν αὐτῷ ἴστο προσάγειν ἡμῖν, λέγοντες, μὴ δεῖν πτεύειν διὰ τὴν διαφωνίαν τῶν Αἰρέσεων. *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 7. p. 886. *Oxon. Edit.* vide *Origen. con. Cels.* L. 3. p. 117. 118. L. 5. p. 273. *Cantab. Edit.*

(*l*) *Origen. con. Cels.* L. 7. p. 368, 9. *Lactan. L. 4. c. 15. Constantini Orat. ad Sanctorum cœt. cap. 19. Augustin. de civit. Dei.* L. 18. c. 46. 47.

(*m*) Et qui hominem summo supplicio pro facinore punitum, & crucis ligna feralia eorum ceremonias fabulantur, congruentia perditis sceleratisque tribuit altaria, ut id colant quod merentur. *Min. Fel. p. 86. ex Officin. Hackiana.* Non adorandæ sed subeundæ cruces. p. 105. vide *Tertull. Apol. cap. 16. Pamel. Edit. Cyrill. con. Julian. L. 6.*

(*n*) Alii plane humanius, & verisimilius, solem credunt Deum nostrum. *Tertull. Apol. c. 16.*

(*o*) — Existiment omnis publicæ cladis, omnis popularis incommodi, Christianos esse causam. Si Tiberis ascendit in mænia, Si Nilus non ascendit in arva, Si cælum stetit, Si terra movit, Si fames, Si lues, Christianos ad leonem. *Tertull. Apol. c. 40. ad Scap. cap. 3.* Dixisti per nos fieri, & quod nobis debeant imputari omnia ista, quibus nunc mundus quatitur & urgetur, quod dii vestri a nobis non colantur. *Cyprian. ad Demetrian. Oxon. Edit. vide Oros. con. Pagan. Origen. Tract. 28. in Matt. Euseb. H. E. L. 9. c. 7. Arnob. con. gentes. L. 1. Augustin. de Civit. Dei. L. 2. c. 2.*

XIII.

XIII. They were charg'd with an unsociable reservedness and taciturnity, and with performing their religious acts in privacy, and obscurity (p).

XIV. They were said to worship the genitals of their priests (q).

XV. They were tax'd with obstinacy and desperation, madness and folly (r).

These

(p) *Celsus* frequently calls the Christian religion, *κενὸς δόγμα*. *Origen. con. Cels. p. 7. & passim.* Latebrosa & Lucifugax natio, in publicum muta, in angulis garrula. *Min. Fel. p. 75. vide p. 83. 92. 106.* Hæc est doctrina sanctorum Prophetarum, quam Christiani sequimur; hæc nostra sapientia, quam isti, qui vel fragilia colunt, vel inanem Philosophiam tuentur, tanquam stultitiam, vanitatemque derident: quia nos defendere hanc publice, atque asserere non solemus, Deo jubente, ut quieti, & silentes arcanum ejus in abdito, atque intra nostram conscientiam teneamus; nec adversus istos vere profanos, qui non discendi, sed arguendi, atque illudendi gratia, inclementer Deum, ac religionem ejus impugnant, pertinaci contentione certemus. Abscondi enim, tegique mysterium quam fidelissime oportet; maxime a nobis, qui nomen fidei gerimus. Verum illi hanc taciturnitatem nostram, velut malam conscientiam, criminantur: unde etiam quasdam execrabiles opiniones, de pudicis, & innocentibus fingunt. *Lactant. L. 7. cap. 27.*

(q) Alii eos ferunt ipsius antistitis ac sacerdotis colere genitalia, & quasi parentis sui adorare naturam. Nescio an falsa, certe occultis ac nocturnis sacris apposita suspicio. *Min. Fel. p. 85.*

(r) Neque enim dubitabam, qualecunque esset quod faterentur, pervicaciam certe, & inflexibilem obstinationem debere puniri. Fuerunt alii similis amentiae. *Plin. ad Trajan. L. 10. Epist. 97.* — Μὴ κατὰ ψιλὴν παράταξιν ὡς οἱ Χριστιανοί. *Marc. Antonin. L. 11. cap. 3.* Sed quidam dementia existimant, quod cum possimus & sacrificare in præsenti, & illæsi abire, manente apud animum proposito, obstinationem saluti præferamus. *Tertull. Apol. c. 27. de spectac. c. 1.* — καὶ ἐπειδὴ τῶν πολλῶν ἢ αὐτῇ ἀποροίᾳ διαμ-

## 14 *The Crimes charg'd, &c.*

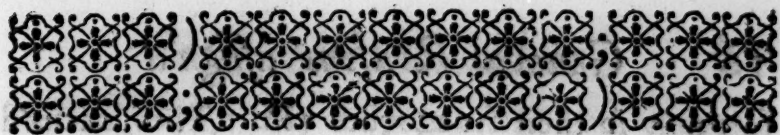
These are all, or at least, the most material objections against the Christians, for the first three hundred years. I shall not take it upon me, to confute those calumnies: this has been already done, by several of the primitive writers, with great judgment, and unanswerable reasoning: but particularly by *Tertullian*, whose Apology discovers an uncommon, and masterly genius, and is one of the most beautiful pieces, that we meet with in antiquity.

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διαμερόντων ἐαυτῶν. *Maxim. Edict. apud Euseb. H. E. L. 8. cap. 17. vide Min. Fel. p. 71. Lactan. L. 4. c. 9. Arrian. in Epictet. L. 4. cap. 7.*

C H A P.





## CHAP. II.

### *General reasons assign'd for those calumnies.*

**B**Efore I proceed to inquire, into the grounds and occasions of every distinct article of accusation, against the primitive Christians, I shall make some general observations, which will, in some measure, solve the difficulty, and discover the original source of every particular calumny.

I. The Heathens bore an implacable hatred towards the Christians, and some of them carried their prejudices so far, that they wou'd not so much as speak to a Christian (a). The foundation of this universal hatred and abhorrence of the Christian name, seems to have been laid by the Jews; who immediately after our Lord's Ascension, sent chosen men into all parts of the world, on purpose to defame the innocent Christians, and to represent them as monsters. They curs'd them

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(a) *Origen. contra Cels. L. 6. p. 294.*

solemnly

## 16 General Reasons assign'd

solemnly in their synagogues (b). They accus'd them before the heathen magistrates : and were always the most active, and forward in every persecution (c).

Another cause of this general hatred was deriv'd from the nature of the Christian religion ; which condemn'd at once, the whole system of the pagan Theology ; and run counter to the settled maxims, and notions of a corrupt, superstitious, and idolatrous world. The Gentiles look'd upon the religion of their country, as of a sacred original : on the influence of which depended their publick, and private happiness, and security : and to see their Gods treated with contempt, and all their sacred rites and ceremonies condemn'd by the Christian religion, made them conceive an irreconcilable aversion to all its professors, and to treat them as the vilest of men, and the worst of creatures. Hence they were willing to hear, and believe the heaviest accusations against the Christians : and ready to forge, or propagate any ridiculous story, that reflected a scandal upon them, or their religion. Hence they

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(b) Καταρώμενοι ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν ἵς πιστευόντας ἐπὶ Ἰδν Χριστόν. *Iust. Mart. dial. cum Tryph. p. 234. 265. 366.*  
vide Hieron. *Comment. in Is. 5. 18.*

(c) *Epist. Ecclesiæ Smyrnens. de Polycarpi Martyrio. cap. 12. 13. 18. vide Iustin. Mart. Apol. 1.*

censur'd,

censur'd, what they did not understand, accus'd the Christians without Evidence, and condemn'd them without giving them a hearing. They wou'd not give themselves the trouble of an enquiry, for fear they shou'd discover those to be innocent, whom they hated, and were resolv'd to ruine (d). And this I take to be one principal cause, and the grand foundation of all those horrid, and scandalous accusations against the primitive Christians.

The truth of this observation will be further evinc'd, if we reflect upon the religious disputes amongst Christians; for human nature is still the same; and the same causes, will produce the same Effects. Even now a days, under the glorious light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our religious differences generally terminate in the vilest calumnies, and the grossest abuses: and have a fatal tendency to divest men of all common humanity, and pity, and to destroy all those excellent qualities, and virtues, that are the peculiar grace, and ornament of a Christian. To attempt a reformation of the grossest abuses, and corruptions in Religion, when countenanc'd by great names, and great numbers, and recommended by an old immemori-

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(d) Hinc vulgus in odium nostri nominis cogunt (dæmones) ut nos odisse incipiant homines, antequam nosse: ne cognitos aut imitari possint, aut damnare non possint. *Cyprian. de Idolorum vanitate. p. 14. vide Tertull. Apol. c. 1.*



al custom ; will inevitably bring upon the reformers of them, the same, or as great hardships and miseries, as the primitive Christians met with, from the hands of their barbarous Persecutors. The cruelties of the church of Rome towards the Protestants, are a remarkable proof of this: and 'tis notorious enough, what an infinite number of the most palpable falsities, have been confidently asserted by some, and implicitly believ'd by others, merely with a design, to blacken, and discredit the Protestant Reformation.

“ The Huguenots in France (as Mr. *Mezeray* inform's us) were charg'd with strange crimes. “ It was said they roasted young Children, and “ after they had made very good chear, the lights “ were all put out, and so men and women “ mingled together. *Mezeray's Hist. of France. p. 648.* Two Informers depos'd, that at those midnight assemblies they did eat of the paschal lamb, and roasted pigg; and afterwards put out the lights, and mingled in an unclean manner. — This calumny was spread abroad by the populace, told in the Louvre, and brought to the ears of the King and Queen: and tho' the witnesses had been convicted of Falshood by the Chancellour, that did not hinder it from making some impression on the Queen. *Ibid. p. 660.*

II. The Heathens were almost as much strangers to the Christians, as if they had liv'd at the remotest distance from them; and therefore 'tis no great wonder, that they so scandalously misrepresented

sentent their characters, and behaviour. *Tertullian* tells them, that they did not understand even the word *Christian*: which they pronounc'd *Chrestianus*; and our Lord they call'd *Chrestus* (e). They were perfectly unacquainted with the manners of the Christians, and the principles of their Religion, and were resolv'd not to learn (f): for they must be conscious, that many of those scandalous accusations were malicious, groundless, and false; and that if they shou'd give the Christians a fair and publick hearing, which was all the favour they desir'd, they cou'd not with any appearance of justice, and reason, oppress them any longer; and shou'd want a specious plea, for further persecutions. Besides, they look'd upon the Christians as the vilest, and most contemptible creatures upon earth: to whom, not the common offices of humanity, and justice, were due: and not to punish them without proof, or evidence of guilt, was indulging them in too great privileges, and putting them upon a level with the rest of mankind.

(e) — Perperam Chrestianus pronunciat a vobis, nam nec nominis certa est notitia penes vos. *Apol. c. 3.* vide *Lactant. de vera Sapient. p. 183.* *Sueton. in vita Claudii.*

(f) — εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἴδεν τὰ κατὰ ἡμᾶς, εὐδὲ δελεῖ μαθεῖν· ἀλλ' αὖτε συναπαρτίζονται· διὸ καὶ κείνη· διώκεται τὸν νοῦν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἀδίκως εἶναι καταλαβόντες, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ μόνον τὸ Χριστιανὸς εἶναι, τὸ βλοῦν ἀδικεῖν καταλαβόντες. *Clem. Alex. Strom. 4. p. 598.*

The Christians living in so obscure, and retir'd a manner, was another reason, why the heathens were such perfect strangers to the Christians, and their religion. They were call'd *latebrosa, & lucifugax natio*. A people that liv'd in silence and obscurity, and refus'd to appear in publick. This accusation, I own, was in a great measure true; and yet the Christians were very far from deserving censure, upon that account. For how cou'd they frequent their places of publick resort, their temples, or theatres, without hearing, or seeing something, or other, that must give offence to any good Christian (g)? The whole world was overrun with Idolatry; and almost the whole race of mankind, was tainted with most capital vices. How could they converse freely with the heathens, when they were pointed at, and expos'd, treated with the utmost contempt, and the utmost cruelty, and continually in danger of being dragg'd to execution? But when the storms of persecution abated, and the Christians cou'd converse with the infidels, without the hazard of their lives, and the violation of their consciences: when the Apologists undertook the defence of the Christian cause,

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(g) Τὰς Θέας ἥς μονομάχων ἡμῶν ἀπείρητο ὄρεον. — ἀλλ' ἔδε τὰς λοιπὰς διωλείας ὄρεον χερσίν. Theoph. ad Autol. L. 3.  
vid. Tertullian. de Spectac. de Idololat.



and their writings came into the hands of their enemies: then the prejudices against the Christians gradually wore off, the calumnies ceas'd, and a great number of converts daily crouded into the church. Had the Christians been permitted openly to plead their own cause, and the infidels condescended to hear, what they did not understand; those lying accusations cou'd not have been of long continuance, and the calumnies must have been dropp'd, almost as soon as forg'd.

The continuance of that mortal hatred and aversion, that Christians of different parties, and denominations, at present bear to one another, is chiefly to be ascrib'd, to the want of a free conversation, and acquaintance, one with another. A difference in religious, or even political matters, generally keeps the contending parties at a very great distance; and makes them hate, and censure, whom they do not know: but a familiar conversation, and a willingness to hear, what every man has to say in his own justification, wou'd soon discover the absurdity, and falshood of those mutual censures, and accusations: wou'd be a means of reconciling our differences, and of promoting the Glory of God, *peace on earth, and good will towards men.*

III. The charge against the primitive Christians was founded upon groundless, and irrational surmises, and supported onely by the Evidence of common fame. The infidels had opportunities enough of discovering the truth; but this was not

what they desir'd. They hated the poor Christians, and therefore every ridiculous tale, tho' equally false, and improbable, gain'd an easy credit with a bigotted heathen. There is but little difficulty in persuading men to believe, what they wish to be true. What if the Christians liv'd in a melancholy retirement, and had their religious assemblies in the night? they were narrowly watch'd by their enemies: they were frequently surpris'd whilst at their devotions (b). Many of them had unbelieving servants (i), who neither wanted inclination to accuse their masters, nor opportunity to know what they did at their sacred assemblies: but all this while there was not one single witness of any tolerable credit produc'd, to justify the truth of any one article of accusation. No one had ever the good fortune, to see that Ass's head, the God of the Christians: nor any one of those infants, they were said to murder. *Cecilius* (k) charges the

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(b) Tot hostes ejus, quot extranei; & quidem proprii ex æmulatione Judæi, ex concussione milites, ex natura ipsi etiam domestici nostri. Quotidie obsidemur. Quotidie prodimur, in ipsis plurimum cætibus, & congregationibus nostris opprimimur. *Tertull. Apol. cap. 7.*

(i) Καὶ δούλοι εἰσιν, ἡμῖν πῶς μὴ καὶ πλείους, τοῖς ὅ ἐλάττω ἐς ἐκ ἐστὶ λαθεῖν ἀλλὰ καὶ τούτων ὁδὸς καὶ ἡμῶν τὰ τυλε- καὶ τὰ ὁδὸ καὶ τὰ ἐνδοξον. *Athenag. Legat. p. 38.*

(k) Nescio an falsa, certe occultis ac nocturnis sacris apposita suspicio. — Vera declarat ipsius prave religionis obscuritas. Cur etenim occultare & abscondere quicquid illud colunt magnopere nituntur? Cum honesta semper publico gaudeant, scelera secreta sint. *Min. Fel. p. 85. 90.*

Christians

Christians with monstrous, and unnatural crimes: but pretends to no evidence, but common report: and he grounds a suspicion of guilt upon the nocturnal assemblies, and the privacy, and obscurity of the Christian worship.

Sometimes I own, servants, women, and children, were prevail'd upon by menaces and tortures, to accuse the innocent Christians (l): and what wonder is it, that people of wicked dispositions, or of a weak and timorous nature, shou'd be tempted to tell a lye, to save their lives, or to prevent a shocking and inhumane cruelty? They did not rack them, with an intention to extort the truth: but they expressly commanded them to accuse the Christians of incest, infanticide, and of eating human flesh; and upon their refusal, they tortur'd them, till they made them say what they pleas'd. In that famous account of the Martyrs of *Lyons* and *Vienne* in *Gaul*, preserv'd by *Eusebius*, we find (m), that heathen servants were brought before the Roman General; who being terrify'd at those cruelties, they saw the Martyrs suffer, were prevail'd upon by the Roman soldiers, to accuse the Christians of unnatural lusts, of murdering of infants, and eating them: and as if the evidence

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(l) Εἰς βασάνες εἰληκτοὶ δικάζαι ὅτι ἡμετέραν, ἢ παῖδας, ἢ γυναικας, καὶ δι' αἰκισμῶν φόβων ἑξαγαγέμενοι κατεπειν ταῦτα τὰ μυθολογούμενα. *Iust. Mart. Apol. 1.*

(m) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 3. cap. 1.*



had been convincing, and demonstrative, the Persecution was renew'd with greater fury. Long after this, in the reign of *Maximin*, certain infamous women at *Damascus*, being threatned with tortures, own'd that they had formerly been Christians, and had been eye witnesses of all those scandalous, and tragical villainies, that were said to be transacted by the Christians, in private. The testimony of those lewd women was inserted into the spurious acts of *Pilate*, a fable stuff'd with ridiculous blasphemies, and dress'd up purely with an intention, to expose the Christian name. These Acts were, by *Maximin's* authority, dispers'd over the Roman Empire; and commanded to be read at the publick Schools (*n*). To supply the defect of all this sham evidence against the Christians, the heathens sometimes made their Gods accuse them: and pretended they had some divine, oracular commission, to persecute the Christians (*o*).

But tho' the generality of the heathens censur'd and condemn'd the Christians, upon no better evidence, than that I have mention'd: yet several of the wiser and better sort amongst them, gave no credit to those vulgar calumnies. Even *Trypho* the Jew, who can never be suspected of partiality in favour of the Christians, fairly owns, that those

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(*n*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 9. cap. 5, 7.*

(*o*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 9. cap. 3.*

slandrous reports were a groundless fiction (p). *Pliny*, tho' a bigotted, and superstitious pagan, after a strict and diligent enquiry, had so much justice and humanity in him, to pronounce the Christians innocent of the popular charge (q). *Serenus Granianus*, Proconsul of Asia, complains of the unreasonable hardships the Christians laboured under (r). The Emperour *Adrian's* letter to *Minucius Fundanus*, and the Edicts of *Antoninus Pius*, and of *Marcus Antoninus*, are all in favour of the Christians (s): and in a word, those heathens who treated the Christians with most justice and mercy, were generally reputed, some of the best and wisest of men: and the bitterest enemies of Christianity were men, of the most infamous characters, even according to the representation of the gentile historians (t).

IV. Because most of the first converts to Christianity were Jews, and the Christian and Jewish Religion agreed in many particulars; several of the heathens call'd the first Christians *Jews*, and

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(p) Περὶ ὃ ὧν οἱ πολλοὶ λέγουσιν, ἔπεισται ἀξιῶν πόρρω  
 ὃ κεχρησθῆκε τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως. *Iust. Dial. c. 17. Trapp.*  
 p. 227.

(q) *Epist. 97. ad Trajan.*

(r) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 4. c. 8.*

(s) *Iust. Mart. Apol. 1. Euseb. L. 4. c. 9, 13, 26.*

(t) Tales semper nobis infecutores, injusti, impii, turpes; quos & ipsi damnare consuevistis, & a quibus damnatos restituere soliti estis. *Tertul. Apol. c. 5.*

## 26 General Reasons assign'd

their religion a *Jewish Superstition* (u): and whilst they were under this mistake, and foolishly imagin'd, that Judaism, and Christianity was pretty near the same thing; they fastned the same reflections upon the Christians, that had been formerly thrown upon the Jewish nation. This seems to have been partly the foundation, of some of those original Calumnies, against the Primitive Christians.

The Fable of the Ass's head, the pretended God of the Christians, seems to have been deriv'd (as I shall shew hereafter more at large) from that stale and senseless reflection upon the Jewish worship, mention'd by *Apion*, *Tacitus*, and some others (w). The charge of infanticide, and of eating human flesh, is pretty much a-kin to *Apion's* tale of a Greek, that was annually murder'd, and eaten by the Jews, and pretended to be found in their temple, by *Antiochus Epiphanes* (x). The charge of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts, suits very well with the character, that *Tacitus*

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(u) *Judæos, impulsore Chresto, assidue tumultuantes, Roma expulit. Sueton. in vita Claud. vide Arrian. in Epictet. l. 2. c. 9. Recognit. S. Clementis. l. 10. c. 64. Hamil. Clement. 4. c. 13.*

(w) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2. Tacit. l. 5. Hist. Dasyryis. apud Suid. voc. Iudas.*

(x) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2.*



gives of the Jews (y). The Christians were accus'd of an unsociable reservedness, and of treating all men with disrespect, excepting those of their own persuasion: and the same objection was made against the Jews (z). The Christians were said to be movers of sedition, and enemies to *Cæsar*: and the same accusation was laid against the Jewish Nation (a).

V. The infidels would make no distinction between real and nominal Christians, and condemn'd the whole body of Christians, for the vices, or errors, of a few wicked men. There always was, and always will be, amongst those who profess the name of Christ, some men of debauch'd, profligate lives, and impious principles: and there were hereticks in primitive Christianity, that were infamous for many blasphemous tenets, and for all manner of abominable lewdness, and debauchery. From these was deriv'd a great load of infamy, upon the whole Christian name: and the religion of the Holy Jesus was blasphem'd amongst the gentiles, for their sakes. The true and

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(y) *Projetissima ad libidinem gens, alienarum concubitu abstinens, inter se nihil illicitum.* — Profana illic omnia, quæ apud nos sacra. Rursum concessa apud illos, quæ nobis incesta. *Hist. l. 5.*

(z) *Adversus omnes alios hostile odium. Ibid.* Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti. *Juvenal. l. 5. Satyr. 14.*

(a) *Joseph. de bello Jud. l. 2. c. 8. vide l. 7. c. 34. c. 37.*

orthodox Christians carefully declin'd all manner of commerce, and conversation with the hereticks: openly disavow'd their principles: solemnly pronounc'd Anathemas against them: and the Apologists gave (b) a publick, and fair representation, of the wide difference, between a true, and heretical Christian: yet notwithstanding all this, the gentiles charg'd all the villainies, and absurdities of the hereticks, upon the whole Christian Society. And their partiality and injustice in this particular was highly remarkable: For, at the same time, that they censur'd alike, all those who call'd themselves Christians: they shew'd particular favour to the hereticks, and suffer'd them to escape with impunity (c): but never had any justice or mercy, for a sincere and innocent Christian.

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(b) *Justin. Apol. 1. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 253. 306.*

(c) *Μὴ δὲ δὴκωντας, μηδὲ φονεύοντας ὑφ' ὧν ἐστὶν, καὶ διὰ τὰ ἔργα, ἐπεσείματα. Justin. Mart. Apol. 1.*



### C H A P. III.

#### *The charge of Incest accounted for.*

**H**AVING assign'd some general reasons, for those original calumnies against the primitive Christians, I proceed to inquire into the Grounds, and occasions of every distinct article of accusation.

The first that I shall mention, is that of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts. The Christians were charg'd with a community of wives, and of having a criminal and unnatural commerce, with their own mothers, and sisters. Their feasts of charity, kept with the strictest, and most religious sobriety, were tax'd with the most abominable lewdness, and debauchery. After Supper, when they were heated, and grown wanton with a luxurious diet, the candles were put out (as the pagans reported it) and every man enjoy'd the woman he accidentally met with.

Several of the ancient writers inform us, that it was the loose and scandalous behaviour of the hereticks, that occasion'd this foul reflection upon the Christians. *Irenæus*, speaking of the absurd,  
and



and impious tenets, the luxury, and lewdness of *Carpocrates*, and his followers, tells us (a); that the gentiles, observing the immoralities of those hereticks, who call'd themselves Christians, took occasion from thence, to asperse the whole body of Christians. *Clement of Alexandria* derives this calumny from the same cause, saying; that the followers of *Carpocrates*, and *Epiphanes* maintain, that all wives ought to be in common. Ἐξ αὐτῆς μετ' αὐτῶν τοῦ ὀνόματος ἐβρίον βλασφημία. From whom was deriv'd the greatest scandal upon the Christian name (b). And he adds further, that it was reported of the *Carpocratians*, that after supper, they us'd to put out the candles, and play all those infamous pranks, that were charg'd upon the innocent Christians (c). *Eusebius* (d), and *Epiphanius* (e), agree with *Clement*, and *Irenaeus*; and found the accusation of uncleanness and incest, upon the lewdness of the *Carpocratians*, and some others of the Gnostick heresy.

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(a) L. 1. cap. 24.

(b) Strom. 3. cap. 2. p. 511.

(c) Τέτρες φασι, καὶ πρὸς ἄλλας ἑλκωτὰς οὗς ὁμοίων κακῶν, εἰς τὰ δεῖπνα ἀθεριζομένους, ——— ἀνδρας οὐκ ἐν γυναικάς, ἐκ ποδῶν ποισαμένους φῶς, τῇ τῷ λύχῳ ἀπείραπῃ, μίγνυντες, ὅπως ἀθάλοιεν, αἷς βελοῖντο. Strom. 3. p. 514.

(d) Hist. Eccles. L. 4. cap. 7.

(e) De Hæres. Carpocrat. p. 104.

*Carpocrates*, amongst other absurdities, maintain'd, that no man cou'd arrive at the perfection of his mysteries, without most consummate lewdness, and lust; and could not otherwise avoid those evil angels, whom he call'd the Governours of the world. He asserted that all things ought to be in common, to all men; and that to be deny'd the liberty of enjoying any woman that he lik'd, was an infringement of the common privileges of Mankind, and contrary to the design of the great creator of all things. He denied that any thing was in its own nature bad, or sinful; and therefore he gave a general license to every one, to act as he pleas'd. In consequence of this, the female hereticks were shameless, and abandon'd prostitutes, and the men were extremely lewd, and lascivious upon principle, and wrought all manner of uncleanness with greediness.

It must be own'd, that the first article of accusation against the Christians, describes exactly enough, the character of the *Carpocratians*: and 'tis highly probable, that the long continuance of the calumny, was owing to the scandalous immoralities of the hereticks: but yet, I can by no means allow, that the lewdness of *Carpocrates*, *Epiphanes*, and their followers, gave the first occasion, for accusing the Christians of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts. For, 'tis generally agreed, that *Carpocrates* began to be a heretick, in *Adrian's* reign, about the same time that *Justin* became

a convert to Christianity. A. D. 130. and therefore the imputation of lewdness and incest, was prior to *Carpocrates* : for *Justin*, whose Authority is undeniably good, acquaints us (f), that the Christians were accus'd of abominable uncleanness, before he was a convert : nay, he dates the three original calumnies of Incest, Infanticide, and Atheism, from our Lord's Ascension, or very soon after. If *Carpocrates* had given the first handle for aspersing the Christians, how could *Justin* be ignorant of it, who liv'd at the same time? and especially, since he wrote a confutation of all hereticks (g); and therefore must be presum'd, to be tolerably acquainted with their errors, and immoralities. Whether the hereticks were guilty of those crimes, that were charg'd upon the Christians, as putting out the candle, promiscuous copulation, and eating of human flesh, he declares (h), he could not tell : from whence one would conjecture, either that *Carpocrates*, had not begun to propagate his heretical villainies, or at least, had made but an inconsiderable progress, when *Justin* presented his first Apology, in behalf of the persecuted Christians, A. D. 140. The banquet,

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(f) *Apol.* 2.

(g) *Apol.* 1.

(h) Εἰ δὲ καὶ τὸ δόγμα ἐπὶ ἀναμωτολογίᾳ ἔργα πράττει, λυχνίας καὶ ἀναίσχυτον, καὶ τὰς ἀνέδω μίξεις, καὶ ἀνθρωπίνων σαρκεῶν βορὰς, ὡς γινώσκουσιν. *Apol.* 1.



or Love feast of the *Carpocratians*, as describ'd by *Clem. Alex.* exactly agrees with the first accusation against the Christians : but then it must be observ'd, that *Clement* mentions it only as a report (*ῥῆλος φασὶ*) or admitting it to be true ; who will affirm that the *Carpocratians* were the same, towards the latter end of the second century, when *Clement* wrote his *Stromata*, as they were in the time of *Justin* ? Every body knows, that the hereticks refin'd upon their masters, and varied in their practices, even whilst they retain'd the same common appellation : for they thought it a credit, to be the first broachers of an error ; and a solid reputation, to be singularly mistaken.

Since then the calumny prevail'd, before the heresy of *Carpocrates*, and *Epiphanes* ; and what *Irenæus*, and *Clement of Alex.* say, in reality, amounts to no more than this, that the lewdness of those hereticks, brought a great scandal upon Christianity (not that they were the first who gave a handle to the gentiles to asperse the Christians) it is evident, that the charge of incest, must have some other foundation.

I shall therefore inquire in the next place, whether there were any hereticks, either in, or near the Apostolick age, whose wicked behaviour could give birth to so odious a calumny.

The *Nicolaitan* heresy, 'tis universally agreed, was so call'd, from *Nicolas*, one of the seven Deacons, mention'd in the Acts of the Apo-

files (i): and yet 'tis generally plac'd, later (k) than the heresies of *Bafilides*, and *Saturninus*. This I cannot account for; unless we suppose, that the heresy was entirely suppress'd, almost as soon as it arose, (which is agreeable to what *Eusebius* (l) says of it), and was afterwards reviv'd, about the middle of the second Century. But whatever was the reason, why many of the Ecclesiastical writers, plac'd this heresy so late: 'tis undeniably evident, that it belongs to the Apostolick age: for *St. John*, in the Revelations, written *A. D.* 96. about the latter end of *Domitian's* reign, makes mention of the *Nicolaitans* (m).

*Nicolas*, the founder of this heresy, has many advocates (n), and many accusers (o). Some maintain his innocence, and throw all the guilt upon the *Ψευδωνύμους Νικολαίτας*, those that were falsely call'd *Nicolaitans*: and others, make no distinction between the Master, and his disciples. *Clement of Alexandria*, a man of great learning, and one that

(i) *Acts* 9. 5.

(k) *Vid. Iren. Heresef. Theodoret. Heret. Fab. Epiphan. Augustin. Philast. Brix.*

(l) Ἐπὶ τέττων δὴτα καὶ ἡ λεγομένη ἐστὶ Νικολαϊτῶν αἵρεσις, ἐπὶ σμικροτάτων σωῆσιν χέρον. *Hist. Eccl. Lib. 3. Cap. 29.*

(m) *Chap. 2. vers. 6. 15. Clem. Alex.* fixeth the origin of this heresy, καὶ πρὶν ὠναληψιν πρὶν τοῦ σωτῆρος. after our Lord's Ascension. whilst the Apostles were living. *Strom. 3. p. 522. vide Iren. l. 3. c. 11.*

(n) *Clem. Alex. Enseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. cap. 29. Theodoret. heret. fab. Constitut. Apostol. l. 6. cap. 1. Ignat. interpolat. Epist. ad Trall.*

(o) *Irenæus. Tertullian. Philast. Epiphan. Greg. Nyss. Hieron. &c.*

was admirably well vers'd, in all sacred and profane history, gives the best account of *Nicolas*, and of the origin of the *Nicolaitan* heresy. He tells us (p), that *Nicolas* had a beautiful wife, of whom he was said to be jealous. And to get rid of the imputation, and to shew the unreasonableness and injustice of the charge, he gave leave to any one to marry his wife, that had a mind to her. This imprudent action was drawn into a precedent; and many wicked men, who were much addicted to sensual pleasures, appeal'd to it, in justification of their lewd and filthy conversation. Besides, he had one very common and familiar expression, which was grossly misinterpreted, by those who call'd themselves *Nicolaitans*. He us'd to say *δὲν παραχρῆς τῇ σαρκί*. *We ought to abuse the flesh*. That is to contradict and oppose all its inordinate desires; to keep under the body, and bring it into subjection. But the *Nicolaitans* found out a quite different meaning of the phrase, and gave it an interpretation, that favour'd, and encourag'd all manner of lewdness and debauchery. *Nicolas* himself, as *Clement* informs us (q), was strictly just to the marriage bed: and his children, who liv'd

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(p) *Strom.* 3. p. 522.

(q) *Ibid.* p. 523.



to a good old age, died virgins. But his pretended followers ἀναδόντες ἐκπορνέοντες, were shameless and abominable fornicators (r). They had a criminal conversation with all women without distinction (s), and were as infamous for lust, and luxury, as the followers of *Carpocrates*, and *Epiphanes*.

There were other hereticks in the Apostolick age, that were equally scandalous, for their obscene, and filthy practices, and those were the followers of *Simon*, the parent, and inventer of all heretical errors, and impurities. This vile impostor said, that he was δὴν αὐτὸν Θεὸν τὴν μέγαλυν. the great power of God: and that he appear'd to the Samaritans as the Father, to the Jews as the Son, and to the Gentiles as the Holy Spirit. He had one *Helen*, an infamous strumpet, for his companion; whom he call'd the first conception of his mind, and the mother of all things (t). This impious, and blasphemous monster asserted, that men were not sav'd by good works, but by his grace. That no action was in its own nature

(r) Ibid.

(s) Indiscrete vivunt. *Iren. adv. Hæres. l. 1. c. 27.*

—— Sectam turpissimam, qua placet usus indifferens fœminarum. *Augustin. de Hæres. Nicolaus qui unus de septem diaconis fuit, die noctuque nuptias faciens, obscænos, & auditu quoque erubescendos coitus somniavit. Hieron. adv. Lucifer. vide Hieron. ad Ctesiphontem. Tertul. præscript. adv. hæres. c. 46.*

(t) *Iren. l. 1. c. 20.*

righteous,

righteous, or sinful ; but only by accident (u). Being himself a man of wicked dispositions, and naturally prone to venery, he maintain'd a community of wives (w) : and instituted mysteries, at the celebration of which, was committed such monstrous, and unparallell'd lewdness, as almost exceeds belief (x). Salvation he promises to those, who obey his directions, and carefully observe his sacred, and mysterious rites. In conformity to their masters commands, and example, the *Simonians* contended, who shou'd exceed one another in lewdness : they gave a loose to their brutal appetite, and abus'd every woman that came in their way.

The rise of the *Simonian*, and *Nicolaitan* heresies, suits very well with the Chronology of the first antichristian calumny, as fix'd by *Justin Martyr*. For the *Nicolaitan* heresy, the later of the two, was, according to *Irenæus* (y), a long time before that

(u) Ibid. vide *Theodoret. Heret. fab. l. i. c. i.*

(w) Ἐδίδαξε ὁ ἀισχροποιτῶν, μίξιν μολυσμῶ, γυναικῶν ἀδιαφορίαν. *Ephraim. l. i. p. 52.*

Docebat detestandam turpitudinem, indifferenter utendi feminis. *Augustin. de Heres. Vide Theodor. Heret. Fab. L. i. cap. i.*

(x) Μυστήρια ὅτι ἐπέθετο ἀισχροποίησι, εὐσεβὲς τε σωμάτων, ὅπως σεμνότερον ὑφηγήσομαι· ἀνδρῶν μὲν διὰ τῆς ἀπέρροιας, γυναικῶν δὲ διὰ τοῦ καὶ ἐπισμῶν καὶ ἐμνηρίων. — Καὶ ταῦτα εἶναι μυστήρια ζωῆς, γνωστέως τε τῆς τελειότητος. *Ephraim. de Simone p. 53. vid. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 2. cap. 13.*

(y) L. 3. cap. 11.

of *Cerintus*; and therefore not many years after our Lord's Ascension. But the heresy of *Simon*, seems to have commenc'd with Christianity it self. For *Philip* baptiz'd *Simon* at *Samaria*, A. D. 35 (z). The same, or at lowest, in the following year, St. *Peter* sharply rebuk'd *Simon*, and rejected his impious proposal, with a resentment, and indignation that it deserv'd: and *Simon*, by way of revenge, deserted the Christian society, and broach'd his blasphemous, and heretical tenets (a).

And as there is an exact agreement, between the rise of those heresies, and the date of the first article of accusation, so the lasciviousness, and uncleanness of those hereticks, is aptly enough describ'd, by the first calumny against the primitive Christians. And since in the infancy of Christianity, and before it was well known, real and heretical Christians, by an easy and natural mistake, might be confounded; might pass under the same common appellation, and be thought in reality the same; it must be exceeding probable, that the *Simonian*, and *Nicolaitan* hereticks, gave the first occasion, to Jews and Gentiles, of aspersing the innocent Christians, and entail'd an infamy upon the

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(z) *Acts* 8. vid. *Pearson. Annal. Paulin.*

(a) There seem to be frequent allusions to the heresies of *Simon* and *Nicolas*, in the writings of the Apostles. See *Ephes.* 5. 12. 2 *Tim.* 3. 6. 2 *Pet.* 2. *Jud. Epist.* 1. *Corinth.* 6.



whole Christian name, that descended down to succeeding generations.

As to that branch of the first article of accusation, that taxes the Christians with a carnal knowledge, even of their own mothers and sisters, it may also be accounted for another way. The primitive Christians, saluted one another, by the title of brethren, and sisters: the old men they call'd fathers, and the aged matrons they call'd mothers (b). St. Paul gives it in charge to Timothy, not to rebuke an elder, but intreat him as a father, and the younger men as brethren. \* The elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity (c). In the language of a primitive Christian, the married women were call'd sisters by their husbands, and treated as such, after the time of child-bearing was over (d). Now the infidels observing the Christians conversing with freedom and familiarity, and cohabiting with those, whom they call'd mothers, and sisters, entertain'd a suspicion of unnatural guilt, and charg'd the Christians with incestu-

(b) Ὁ νομοθέτης ὁ πρῶτος ἐπέσειν αὐτὰς, ὡς Ἀδελφοὶ πάντες εἶεν ἀλλήλων. Lucian. de morte Peregrini.

(c) 1 Tim. 5. 1, 2. 1 Cor. 5. 11. 7. 15. Rom. 16. 1.

(d) Conjugi tuæ quæ futura est Soror tua. Hermas Vis. 2. cap. 2. Sed nec sororem tuam negligas. Ibid. cap. 3. Vid. Clem. Alex. Strom. 3. 1 Cor 9. 5. Ἀδελφὴ δὲ τούτῳ ἡ γυνὴ ὡς τῷ πατρὶ καὶ ὡς ὁμοπατρίᾳ κρίνεται. Clem. Alex. Strom. 6. p. 790. Nobiscum dormies ut frater non ut maritus. Herm. Simil. 9. cap. 11. Athenag. Legat. p. 36.



*Indians*, and *Æthiopians*, are said to have had a criminal, and unnatural commerce, with mothers and grand-mothers, with daughters and grand-daughters (*g*). *Nero*, that monster of lust, and cruelty, is said to have been too familiar with his own mother (*h*). *Caligula* debauch'd all his sisters, and cohabited with one of them, as if she had been his legal wife (*i*): and in a word, there are numberless instances of incestuous mixtures, to be met with in civiliz'd nations, as well as in those, whom the Greeks and Romans call'd rude, and barbarous. From hence perhaps was deriv'd the charge of incest against the primitive Christians, whom the heathens look'd upon as the vilest of creatures, and capable of committing even the worst of crimes, that the worst of men were guilty of.

What the infidels objected against the nocturnal assemblies and the Christian *Agapæ*, or Love feasts,

*adv. Jovinian. L. 2. Recognit. Clement. cap. 24. Strabo*, speaking of the old Inhabitants of *Ireland*, tells us, it was reported of them, that they ate human flesh, and lay with their Mothers and Sisters. *Geograph. l. 4. p. 139. vide Dion. Cass. l. 76. p. 866.*

(*g*) *Hieron. ibid. vide Quint. Curt. l. 8. p. 204.*

(*h*) *Sueton. in vit. Neronis. cap. 28.*

(*i*) Cum omnibus sororibus suis stupri consuetudinem fecit. — Ex his Drusillam vitiasse virginem pretextatus adhuc creditur. — In modum justæ uxoris pro-palam habuit. *Sueton. in vit. Calig. cap. 24. vide cap. 36. cap. 26. in vit. Claud. cap. 22. in vit. Domit. Dion. Cass. l. 67. p. 760.*

is



is an exact description of their own impurities, and of that abominable lewdness, that was committed in all the pagan temples, almost in all parts of the world.

*Nero*, who made a judgment of other mens vicious dispositions by his own, was of opinion, that no man was chaste: but that some had got the art of concealing their vices better than others (*k*), and I don't in the least doubt, but it was a consciousness of their own uncleanness, and immoralities, that made the heathens cast so vile a reflection upon the sacred assemblies of Christians. They observ'd the Christians privately assembling in the night, men and women together. They consider'd that temptations would arise, and that darkness and retirement would give favourable opportunities. They knew that those private meetings were prohibited by the laws of the twelve tables, and were not able to assign the reason, why the Christians shou'd assemble together with that privacy, upon any honourable design. They had heard, it may be, of the kiss of charity amongst Christian (*l*); which they con-

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(*k*) *Ex nonnullis comperi, persuasissimum habuisse eum, neminem hominem pudicum, aut ulla corporis parte purum: verum plerosq; dissimulare vitium, & calliditate obtegere. Sueton. de Nerone. cap. 29.*

(*l*) Ἀλλήλους φιλήμασι ἀσπαζόμεθα παυσίμηνος ἢ εὐχῶν.  
*Justin. Mart. Apol. 1. vide Clem. Alex. Pedagog. l. 3. p. 301.*

strued a sign of lasciviousness, and an introduction to lewdness. They were sensible of the corruptions of human nature, and ignorant, how nature is to be improv'd by grace, and the most headstrong passions subdued by religion. They knew what lewdness was committed in their temples, under the specious covert of religion; and therefore they cast a vile reflection upon the religious assemblies of Christians, and taxed them with uncleanness, only because they were guilty themselves.

The Tyrant *Licinius*, an implacable enemy to the Christians, by a publick Edict, forbade the Christian men and women to meet together, at their places of publick worship. To preserve inviolable the chastity of the Christian women, he order'd that no Bishop should instruct the women; but that they should be taught by those of their own sex. He commanded the Christians to have their assemblies without the gates, in the open fields; under a pretence, that the air was more wholesome there, than in crowded cities. Now he produc'd no evidence of any guilty commerce amongst Christians, at their sacred assemblies: he only intimated a suspicion of guilt, and the reason and foundation of this suspicion is mention'd  
by

by the historian (*m*), viz. that he was infamous for adultery, and all manner of lewdness and debauchery, and like *Nero*, judg'd of other men's vicious inclinations by his own. I mention this Edict of *Licinius*, not as being any ways the occasion of the first antichristian calumny, but as it describes, the sentiments of the pagans, and affords a remarkable proof, of what I am contending for, that the reflection upon the Christian assemblies had its original rise, from the impure and lascivious practices of the Heathens.

*Cecilins*, in *Minucius Felix*, charge's the Christians with lewdness, because they saluted one another by the name of brother, and sister (*n*). Now the reason of this accusation is manifestly deriv'd, from a common practice amongst the heathens, who, whilst they were carrying on a lustful intrigue, and had a mind to conceal their wickedness, under an honourable name, call'd one another brother, and sister. There are many instances of this kind to be met with, in the hea-

(*m*) *Euseb. de vita Constantini. L. 1. cap. 52, 53.*

(*n*) *Passim etiam inter eos quædam libidinum religio miscetur: ac se promiscue appellant fratres, & sorores, ut etiam non insolens stuprum intercessione sacri nominis fiat incestum. p. 81.*



then Poets (o). Brother and sister was the Language of lust, amongst the heathens; and therefore it pass'd for such amongst the Christians, who were censur'd for crimes, that their enemies onely were guilty of.

'Tis almost incredible, what filthy lewdness was committed by the pagans, and especially in their Temples; which were no better than publick stews, and receptacles for common prostitutes. It was not without good reason, the Satyrist ask'd the following question,

*Quo non prostat fœmina Templo (p) ?*

What Temple is there where there are not prostitutes? In the Temple at *Corinth*, dedicated to *Venus*, there liv'd no less than a thousand harlots. The mysteries of *Cybele* were nothing but a scene of matchless uncleanness, and monstrous lusts. The sacred rites of *Venus* were of the same nature: and almost the whole gentile world (q), under a pretence

(o) Fratrem te vocat, & soror vocatur. Cur vos nomina nequiora tangunt? *Martial. L. 2. Epig. 4.* Quare desine me vocare fratrem, ne te carmenion vocem sororem. *Ibid. L. 10. Ep. 65.* — Concilio tibi O Juvenis, Sororem. Habes & tu quidem fratrem, neq; me piguit quærere, sed quid prohibet & sororem adoptare? *Petron. Sat. p. 458.* Vid. *Ovid. Metamorph. L. 9. Vers. 557.*

(p) *Juvenal. Sat. 9. v. 23.*

(q) Οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοι χάδον πάντες ἀνθρώποι, πλὴν Ἀἰγυπτίων καὶ Ἑλλήνων, μίσχονται ἐν ἱερίοις. *Herodot. L. 2. cap. 64.* Tantaq;

pretence of religion, was guilty of uncleanness in the temples. And for this very reason, the heathens tax'd the private meetings of Christians with lewdness, and gave an odious character of their nocturnal assemblies.

I have now done with the first article of accusation against the primitive Christians, and have attempted, as well as I am able, to account for the imputation of promiscuous, and incestuous lusts. But before I proceed to the second calumny, it may not be improper, to inquire a little further, into the character of the primitive Christians; to see whether they gave any just grounds for censure, or any ways occasion'd that severe charge of unnatural lewdness, by their own vicious conduct, or imprudent behaviour.

I am far from vindicating every thing, that was done by the primitive Christians: as they were men, they cou'd no more be entirely exempt from error, than they were from mortality: but it must be allow'd me, that the corruptions in faith and in practice, were nothing near so numerous, and great, then, as they were, in succeed-

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*Tantaq; animorum insipientia fuit, & tam præceps libido imperiti vulgi, ut omnes fere mortales in templis coire, & nefandis libidinibus immisceri, ac pudendis genitalibus sacrum facere, quod procreationis seminarium forent, nefas non putarent. Alex. ab Alex. Genial. dier. L. 6. cap. ult. Tertul. Apol. cap. 15.*

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ing ages: for their vicinity to the Days of a God incarnate, gave them a more lively sense of the divine mercies, and inflam'd their zeal: this zeal reform'd their manners, and made them conscientiously discharge the duties of a Christian: this innocence of Life entitled them to God's holy Spirit, and 'tis that blessed Spirit that leads men into all truth, and holiness.

As to the charge of uncleanness, there is nothing in nature could ever have been more malicious, barbarous, and unjust. For there was scarce any one virtue, by which the first Christians were more eminently distinguish'd, than by that of chastity. A virtue more peculiarly cultivated by the Christians, and guarded with the utmost circumspection, and care. When they were tempted to lust, by many artful and moving persuasions; and terrify'd by a prospect of inhuman tortures; they generally prefer'd a painful, and ignominious death; and dreaded more the sollicitations of sensual Pleasures, than the inveterate rage of their cruellest enemies. If those early Christians were any ways culpable, it was for having too rigid notions of continency, and for carrying it further, than perhaps they had any lawful warrant, either from sacred Scripture, or Apostolical practice. They were so far from having a criminal commerce with all sorts of women, without distinction; that they either liv'd under a state of perpetual virginity, or married but once, and  
knew



knew no other woman all their lives (r). Second and third marriages were generally reputed unlawful, and were call'd by no better a name, than a plausible Adultery (f). A Digamist was a name of reproach, and those that had been twice married after baptism, were unqualify'd for holy orders, by the canons of the primitive church (t).

I cannot say that the reasons, upon which second and third marriages were condemn'd, seem to have much weight in them; or that the texts of Scripture, appeal'd to upon this occasion, are pertinent-ly cited (u). However it was a very pardonable mistake, and especially as it proceeded, from an honest Zeal, and a laudable design of promoting Christian purity, and piety. A repetition of marriage was suppos'd to proceed from a criminal in-

(r) *Ευεγεις δ' ἂν πολλὰς ἡμῶν παρ' ἡμῶν, καὶ ἀνδρας καὶ γυναῖ-  
κας, καὶ ἀγνηστίας ἀγάμεις.* — *ἢ οἷος τις ἐτέχθη,  
ἐξέειν, ἢ ἐφ' ἐνὶ γάμῳ.* *Athenag. legat. p. 37.* At nos  
pudorem non facie, sed mente præstamus, Unius Matrimo-  
nii vinculo libenter inhæremus. Cupiditatem procreandi  
aut unam scimus, aut nullam. *Min. Fel. p. 307. vid. p. 310.*  
*Iust. Mart. Apol. 1. Theoph. ad Autol. l. 3. Origen contra Gels.*  
*l. 7. p. 365.*

(f) *Ὁ δὲ δότιος (γάμῳ) ἐνπρεπὴς ἔστι μοιχεύει.* *A-  
thenag. Legat. p. 37.* — Samaritanæ illi prævariatrici,  
quæ in uno viro non mansit, sed fornicata est in multis  
nuptiis. *Iren. l. 3. cap. 17. vid. Constitut. Apostol. l. 3.*  
*cap. 2.*

(t) *Canon. Apostol. 17. vid. Origen. Homil. 17. in Luc. Ter-  
tul. de exhort. castit. cap. 7. ad uxor. l. 1. cap. 7. Hieron. adv.*  
*Jovinian. l. 1.*

(u) *Vide Athenag. p. 37. Constitut. Apostol. l. 3. cap. 2.*

dulgence of a carnal appetite, and for this reason, it was more severely censur'd by a primitive Christian.

The sole end of marriage, in their opinion, was procreation of children ; and therefore during the time of gestation, and after the time of child-bearing was over, they abstain'd from all conversation with their wives (*w*). The use of the marriage-bed was confin'd, under strict regulations, and all excesses and abuses there, were condemn'd by a primitive Christian (*x*). Adultery, and fornication was very rare, in those Days ; and the guilty criminal never escap'd the censure of ecclesiastical authority : he was solemnly turn'd out of the Christian society, and not re-admitted, till he had gone through a long course of penance, and had given evident proof, of a true humiliation, and sorrow, and of a sincere resolution to reform (*y*). They practis'd the duties of mortification, and self-denial, in an eminent, and wonderful degree. It was no hard matter for them, to keep within the bounds of sobriety, and chastity, who kept

(*w*) Οὐκ ἐγγαμίζουσιν, εἰ μὴ ἐν τῇ παιδείᾳ ἀναίεστον. *Iust. Mart. Apol.* 1. vide *Athenag. Legat.* p. 37.

(*x*) Nos ab isto eventu diligentissima & fidelissima castitas sepsit, quantumq; ab stupris, & ab omni post matrimonium excessu, tantum & ab incesti casu, tuti sumus. quidam multo securiores, totam vim hujus erroris virgine continentia depellunt, senes, pueri. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 9.

(*y*) Vide *Can. Ancy.* 20. *Basil.* 7, 58, 59. *Apostol.* 53.

under all inordinate desires of the flesh, by an amazing temperance, and abstinence. Like *St. Paul*, they were in hunger, and thirst, in fastings often, in cold, and nakedness. Their meat was very often the product of uncultivated nature; and the beast and his owner, generally drank at the same fountain. They ate and drank, as if they suspected a poyson; and laid themselves down to rest, as if they were to awake in another world.

The reason why the grand adversary of mankind, so succesfully prevails, is, the flesh takes part with the Tempter, and betrays us, under the disguise of friendship, and pleasure. Weak human nature enters into the conspiracy, and the man is divided against himself. When the passions have been humour'd a long time, reason submits to sense; is under the dominion of the will, and the slavery of every inferiour faculty: and you may as well talk a tempest into silence, as make a darling, habituated passion, hear the voice of reason, or religion. Those worthy Christians were very sensible of this: so that they guarded against all the sollicitations of sense, and us'd the good creatures of God to support nature, and not to improve its corruptions. They were strangers to delicacies, softness, and ease; and lead a life of sorrows, in hopes of obtaining a joyful resurrection. Their crucify'd Lord was in Heaven, and therefore their affections, their conversation was there.





## CHAP. IV.

### *The charge of Infanticide accounted for.*

**T**HEY were charg'd with Infanticide, with murdering of infants, and eating them.

A very young sucking infant was brought to the priest, cover'd over with paste, lest any one shou'd be shock'd at the intended barbarity. The child was prick'd all over with pins, or bodkins; and as soon as it was dead, they cut the body in pieces, and ate it. They drank the blood, and mutually engag'd not to divulge their sacred mysteries. This was said to be the Christians method of Initiation.

This calumny, which the primitive Christians complain'd of, as the cruellest of all (a), is very hard to be accounted for: since the Apologists have left us no hints, whereby we can discover, its true cause, and original foundation. The first Christians were many times censur'd, for vices and follies that were not their own; and the villanies,

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(a) *Theoph. ad Autol. p. 119.*

and absurdities of a few spurious, and heretical Christians, were frequently put to the account of the whole Christian society: but to deal ingenuously, I cannot find any sufficient reason, or authority, to tax the primitive hereticks, with giving the infidels a handle to accuse the Christians, of infanticide, and of eating human flesh.

The practices of the *Montanists*, as describ'd by the fathers of the fourth century, are pretty much of a piece, with the second antichristian calumny. *St. Austin* (b), *Epiphanius* (c), and *Philastrinus* (d) tell us, that the *Montanists*, at one of their festivals, us'd to take a child of a year old, and prick him all over his body with needles. The extracted blood they mix'd with flower of wheat, and of this they made their sacramental bread. If the child surviv'd this cruelty, he was look'd upon as an high priest: and if he died he was reputed a martyr. *Cyril of Jerusalem* carries the charge against the *Montanists* a great deal further, and in exact conformity to the second article of accusation

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(b) Nam de infantis anniculi sanguine, quem de toto ejus corpore minutis punctiorum vulneribus extorquent, quasi Eucharistiam suam conficere perhibentur, miscentes eum farinæ, panemq; inde facientes: qui puer si mortuus fuerit, habetur apud eos pro martyre: si autem vixerit, pro magno sacerdote. *De Hæres.* 26. Vide *de Hæres.* 27.

(c) *Hæres.* 48. p. 416, 417.

(d) *Hæres.* 49.

against

against the primitive Christians, tells us, that they cut the child in pieces and ate him (e). *Isidore Pelusiota* too taxes the *Montanists* with magick, and murdering of infants (f).

This whole story, I must confess, appears to be a fiction, and a mere calumny : for *Epiphanius*, *Austin*, and *Philastrius* speak of it doubtfully, and only as a common report. And on the other hand, the *Montanists* themselves stoutly deny'd the charge, and vindicated their innocence in this matter (g). *Jerome* gives little or no credit to this report (h) ; and the author of that catalogue of heresies, that goes under the title of *Predestinatus*, rejects it as a fable (i) : and for this weighty, and substantial reason, viz. the first writers against *Montanism* take no notice of it : he means, I suppose, *Asterius Urbanus*, and *Apollonius*, that are mention'd by *Eusebius* (k).

But allowing the charge against the *Montanists* to be true, and founded upon undeniable facts : yet the second calumny against the primitive Chri-

(e) *Catech.* 16. p. 178.

(f) *L. 1. Epist.* 242.

(g) *Theodoret. Heret. Fab. L. 3. cap. 2.*

(h) *Epist. ad Marcellam adversus Montanum.*

(i) Cætera quæ dicuntur quasi incerta prætereo : de infantis sanguine eos accipere. Quod ideo dicimus, ne videamur ignorare omnia, quæ de iis dicuntur. Hi enim qui contra eos scripserunt, nihil hinc penitus memorarunt. *Cap. 26. L. 1.*

(k) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 5. cap. 16, 18.*



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stians, cou'd not be occasion'd by those hereticks : for, murdering of infants, and eating of human flesh, seems to have been (as I have already shown) one of those original objections, that are as old as Christianity it self, or very near it. When as the *Montanist* heresy did not spring up, till about the middle of the second century. *Eusebius* dates the rise of it, from the year 170 (l). The *Alexandrian Chronicle* fixes it ten years later. *Blondel* supposes (m), that it began about the year 140 : and *Epiphanius* several years sooner (n). And indeed there can hardly be any thing more intricate (to use the words of the learned author of the history of *Montanism*) than to find out the true date of the rise of *Montanism*, amidst the variety of conjectures, and critical remarks upon it (o). However it is apparent enough, that it had its rise some time in the second century ; and therefore is of a much later date than the second antichristian calumny.

*Epiphanius* tells a story of the *Gnosticks*, which is parallel to that, which is related of the *Montanists* : but neither does this give any further light to our inquiry, nor discover the original source of the calumny. The *Gnosticks*, he says, by some violent method or other, us'd to draw a child out

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(l) *Hist. Eccles. L. 5. cap. 3.*

(m) *Sibyll. L. 2. cap. 2.*

(n) *Hæres. 48. p. 404, 455.*

(o) *Hist. of Montanism. p. 77.*

of its mothers womb, and beat it to pieces in a mortar : and lest this odd sort of food shou'd be nau-  
seous to a squeamish stomach, they mix'd with it  
honey, pepper, and some other spices. When  
this was done they all tasted of it, and this they  
call'd τέλειον πάχα, a perfect passover (p).

Upon this monstrous and incredible story, I observe,  
first. That it rests upon the single authority of *Epipha-  
nius*, which, to speak impartially, is none of the best.  
For tho' we have from him, the fullest, and most  
particular account that is extant, of the heresies  
for the first four hundred years : and he was justly  
celebrated for his great learning, and piety ; yet  
he has intermix'd so many strange, and improba-  
ble relations, as leave but too just room to suspect  
that he was a man of great credulity, and easily  
impos'd upon. Whilst he follows *Justin*, *Irenæus*,  
and *Hippolytus*, great and venerable names, his la-  
bours are highly useful, and commendable : but  
in describing the heresies of his own time, where  
one might have expected the greatest exactness,  
there are too many things, that seem to border  
upon fable, and fiction.

2. *Irenæus* has left us a very exact account of the  
*Gnostick* hereticks, in the Apostolick age, and se-  
veral years after. We learn from him that the  
*Simonians* were call'd *Gnosticks* (q) : and that several

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(p) *Hæres.* 26. p. 87.

(q) *Simoniani*, a quibus falsi nominis scientia accepit  
initia. *Iren.* l. 1. cap. 23.

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of the succeeding hereticks were fond of that name ; since they pretended to a knowledge, superior to that of the rest of mankind. He particularly describes their errors, and abominable practices, but says not one syllable of that horrid crime, that is mention'd by *Epiphanius*. *Hippolytus's* book against the hereticks is lost ; and *Justin's* has met with the same fate : however in one of his Apologies, *Justin* makes an open declaration ; which clear's (as far as his own knowledge went) all hereticks in general, from the imputation of Infanticide, and eating of human flesh (r).

3. But to put the matter beyond dispute. What *Epiphanius* says of the *Gnosticks*, evidently relates, not to the primitive *Gnosticks*, the *Simonians*, *Menandrians*, *Basiliidians*, *Carpocratians*, &c. but to those of his own time (s). Nay he expressly says, that those *Gnosticks* endeavour'd to seduce him, in his youth. So far then were those *Gnostick* hereticks, from giving birth to the second calumny against the Christians ; that 'tis very probable, the calumny was dropp'd, and almost forgotten, before *Epiphanius's* time ; and before the rise of that heresy, which he describes, and confutes.

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(r) *Apol.* 2.

(s) Καὶ εἰ μὴ παρεληλύθει ἡ πρῶτη αἵρεσις, καὶ ὑπέκρινον ἐν τῷ βίῳ, ἀγαθὸν ἦν ταύτῃ διαφέρειν, καὶ μὴτε ὅλως ἀεὶ αὐτοῖς εἰπεῖν. ἐπειδὴν δὲ καὶ ἐστὶν, καὶ περὶ ἡμετέρας. κ. τ. λ. p. 97. Vide p. 99, 100.



It is said of *Simon* the heretick, the vilest wretch that the Christian world was ever acquainted with, that he kill'd a little boy, and hung up his picture in his bed-chamber; and by some unaccountable charms, oblig'd the soul of the murder'd child, to assist him in his diabolical operations, and magical delusions (t). *St. Luke's* account of him is, that for a long time he had bewitch'd the people of *Samaria* with sorceries, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, this man is the great power of God (u). The antients represent him as a wonderful magician, and he is said to have done many surprizing things, by his infernal art; and since murdering of Infants was a common, and prevailing practice, amongst the pagan sorcerers, and necromancers, as I shall shew by and by, the above mention'd story of *Simon*, carries the greater appearance of probability.

But still it is liable to as great exceptions, as that of the *Gnosticks*, related by *Epiphanius*: for there is not any one author of credit, that mentions it, even whilst we have many, and particular accounts of *Simon's* blasphemies, his errors, and impurities. The story, as far as I remember, is no where to be met with, but in the *Recognitions* of *Clement*, the *Clementine Homilies*, and the

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(t) *Recognit. Clem. L. 2. cap. 13. Epit. de Gestis Petri cap. 27. Homil. Clement. L. 2. cap. 26.*

(u) *Acts 8. 9, 10.*

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Epitome of the *Acts of Peter* : all of which, seem to be the forgery, of one, and the same Impostor. They contain so many things, that are unworthy of *Clement*, the famous Bishop of *Rome*, that the learned have unanimously pronounc'd them spurious : and whoever was the author of them, he seems to have been of a class, even below the compiler of the eight books of *Apostolical Constitutions*, and cou'd neither be a companion of the Apostles, nor one that liv'd in the Apostolick age (w).

Since then we have no good authority, for deriving the occasion of the second antichristian calumny, from the hereticks : let us see in the next place, whether the inhuman cruelties, practis'd by the heathens themselves, might not be the true, and original foundation, of that unjust charge against the primitive Christians, contain'd in the second article of accusation.

To kill Infants, and to drink human blood, was the practice in several parts of the heathen world : and this was done upon several accounts, in making of publick, or private leagues of friendship. in forming of conspiracies. in sacrificing to the pagan deities. in necromancy, and other magical operations. It was a custom amongst the *Scythians*, a people famous for friendship, when they mutually engag'd to live in peace, and amity

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(w) Vide *Cotelerii prefat. ad Recognit. &c. Græb. Spicileg.*

with one another; to drink one anothers blood: and this was look'd upon as a most sure, and sacred pledge of an inviolable friendship (x). *Tacitus*, speaking of a league that was made, between *Rhadamistus*, and his uncle, the king of *Armenia*, acquaints us, that it was an usual ceremony, when kings entred into a treaty, or league, to joyn their right hands, and tie their thumbs close together; and then to let out the blood, confin'd in the ends of their thumbs; which they afterwards drank (y). The same things are reported of the *Medes*, and *Lydians*, by *Herodotus*, and of the *Scythians* too; with this additional ceremony; that before they drank the blood, they dipp'd the points of their swords in it (z).

In conspiracies too the persons concern'd us'd to drink human blood; and with horrid oaths, and imprecations promise secrecy, and their utmost assistance, in carrying on the grand design. Thus when *Sariafter* conspir'd against his father, the king of *Armenia*, he oblig'd his friends, and accomplices in the Treason, to drink one anothers blood (a). *Sallust* tells a remarkable story of *Catiline*, who was at the head of a conspiracy,

(x) Ἐνγεμόντες, ἀπ᾽ τὰς δακτύλους, ἐνσταλάζοντες τὸ αἷμα εἰς κύλινα, καὶ τὰ ξίφη ἀκροβαφαντες, αἷμα ἀμφοτέρω ἐπὶ στήθεσσι, πίνοντες, καὶ ἔστιν ὃ π μὲν τῶν ὑμᾶς διαλύσεων αὐτῶν. *Lucian. Toxaris vel amicitia. p. 67.*

(y) L. 12. *Annal.*

(z) L. 1. cap. 74. L. 4. cap. 70. vide L. 3. cap. 8.

(a) *Valer. Max. L. 9. cap. 11.*

that



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that might have prov'd fatal to the Roman liberties, had it not been for the great wisdom, vigilance, and dexterity of the consul *Cicero*. The historian, in that beautiful description of the *Catilinarian* war, says, it was reported of *Catiline*, that at a meeting of the conspirators, he handed about a cup full of Wine, and human blood mix'd : and when all his friends had tasted of it, he told them, his intention by doing this, was to engage them, to act with the greater heartiness, and fidelity, in the cause they were imbarqu'd in (b). This story is alluded to by *Tertullian*, and some other Apologists for the Christians (c) : and is told by *Dion Cassius*, with new, and surprising circumstances. he says (d), what the conspirators drank, was the blood of a child, kill'd for that very purpose, by *Catiline* ; and that he oblig'd his companions, and partners in the treason, to swear upon the bowels of the murder'd infant. *Statius*, and some others, speak of conspiracies, that were carried on in the same method (e) : which gives a greater appearance of probability to the relation of the above mention'd historian.

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(b) *Bell. Catilin. cap. 22. L. Flor. L. 4. cap. 1.*

(c) *Nescio quid & sub Catilina degustatum. Apol. cap. 9. Min. Fel. p. 297.*

(d) *Hist. Rom. l. 37. p. 43. vide Plutarch. in vit. Ciceron.*

(e) *L. 5. Thebaidos. vide Alex. ab Alex. L. 5. cap. 3.*

Many

Many of the altars, dedicated to the pagan deities, were polluted with human blood; and great numbers, both of infants, and adult persons, were offer'd up in sacrifice, by the ignorant and superstitious heathens, to *Saturn*, *Jupiter*, *Mercury*, *Diana*, &c. At the funeral of any considerable person, human sacrifices were very common: and to this barbarous usage, *Homer* alludes (f), when he makes his *Hero*, *Achilles*, slay twelve captives, at the funeral of *Patroclus*. In imitation of this example, *Aeneas*, sacrific'd eight young men, at the funeral of *Pallas* (g). The ancient *Gauls* were of opinion, that human Sacrifices, were the most acceptable to the Gods of any; and therefore, when they were visited with sickness, or any other calamity, they vow'd to sacrifice, either themselves, or some other men (h). The *Tauri*, sacrific'd to *Diana*, all the strangers they could catch (i). *Aristomenes* the *Messenian*, at one sacrifice to *Jupiter*, slew three hundred men: one of whom was *Theopompus*, king

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(f) *Iliad*. 21. ver. 27.

(g) ————— *Sulmone creatos*  
*Quatuor hic Juvenes; totidem, quos educat Ufens,*  
*Viventes rapit, Inferias quos immolet umbris,*  
*Captivoq; rogi perfundat sanguine flammæ.*

*Virgil. Æneid. L. 10. vers. 517.*

(h) *Cæsar de Bello Gallico. L. 6. Cicero pro Fonteio. Pompon. Mela L. 3. Euseb. Præp. Evangel. L. 3. cap. 17. Tertul. Apol. cap. 9. Plin. Nat. Hist. L. 30. cap. 1.*

(i) *Lucian. Toxar. Euseb. præp. Evangel. L. 9. Q. Curt. L. 4. Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Græcos. p. 36.*

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of the *Lacedemonians* (k). The antient *Britons*, *Germans*, *Cretians*, with a great many others, are said to have been guilty of this most inhuman, and infamous practice (l). But as for infanticide, the *Carthaginians* exceeded all the people in the world besides: they sacrific'd their own children to *Saturn*, and those that had none, were oblig'd to buy some of the poorer sort. When they were overcome by *Agathocles*, king of *Sicily*, they imagin'd their God *Saturn* was very angry with them; and to appease his wrath, they murder'd at one sacrifice, two hundred noblemens sons (m).

This devilish custom of sacrificing the human race, was not peculiar to those people, who were accounted rude, and barbarous; but it was to be met with amongst those, who had made considerable improvements in all the politer arts. After the fatal battle at *Canna*, the people of *Rome*, under the greatest consternation, and expecting the conquering enemy at their gates, buried four people alive, by way of sacrifice to the infernal Gods (n). *Pliny* mentions a decree of the Roman senate, made about an hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, which prohibited human sacrifices: and

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(k) *Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Græcos. p. 36.*

(l) *Plin. Nat. Hist. L. 30. cap. 1. Tacit. Annal. L. 14. de Moribus German. Diodor. Sic. L. 5.*

(m) *Pescenius Festus apud Lactant. l. 1. cap. 21. Cyril. adv. Julian. l. 4. Augustin. de Civitate Dei. l. 7. cap. 19. Platonis Minos. sive de lege.*

(n) *Livii Hist. l. 22.*



tells us, how much the world was beholden to the Romans, for rooting out those monsters, that accounted human sacrifices a commendable, and religious action ; and the eating of human flesh, a very wholsom thing (o). But this decree, after all those mighty boasts of *Pliny*, had no very great effect : for 'tis certain, that abominable practice prevail'd very much, even until the reign of the emperor *Adrian* (p). Nor did it then entirely cease: for, several years afterwards, we find it was a custom, even in *Rome*, the imperial city ; to sacrifice a man, at one of their annual festivals, to *Jupiter Latiaris* (q). Nor is there any reason to question the authority, of the Christian Apologists in this matter ; or to censure them, for being too severe, in retorting the charge of infanticide upon the pagans : since the facts they mention, are principally taken from the gentile historians, and attested by those, who were very far from carrying any prejudices, in favour of Christianity (r).

Infants, and little children, were also murder'd by the magicians, and necromancers of old : and as the pagan *Haruspices*, or *Extispices*, pretended to

(o) *Nat. Hist.* l. 30. cap. 1.

(p) *Lactant.* l. 1. cap. 21. *Porphyr. de Abstinencia* l. 2. cap. 56. *Euseb. de laude Constant.* p. 659.

(q) *Hodieq; ab ipsis Latiaris Jupiter homicidio colitur ; & quod Saturni filio dignum est, mali & noxii hominis sanguine saginatur.* *Min. Fel.* p. 297. *Tertul. adv. Gnostic.* cap. 7.

(r) *Vide Porphyr. de Abstinencia. cap. 54, 55, 56, 57. l. 2.*

guess at the success of any action ; and to discover future events, by looking into the entrails of beasts ; so the magicians consulted the Gods, *in fibris infantum*, by looking into the bowels of infants (s). *Dionysius of Alexandria*, in one of his epistles (t), speaks of an *Ægyptian* conjurer, in the reign of *Valerian*, who in his magical operations, ripp'd up new born infants, and examin'd their bowels. The same things are reported of *Maxentius*, who was a bigotted observer of all the pagan superstitions (u). In *Julian's* reign, many children, of both sexes, were murder'd by magicians, at *Athens*, *Alexandria*, and several other places (w). And long before that time, that horrid and infernal practice is mention'd, by *Justin Martyr* (x), *Horace* (y), and some others.

By these instances that I have given, it evidently appears, that the pagan usages are very well describ'd, in the second antichristian calumny ; and that whatever reason there was, for fastening the charge of infanticide upon the primitive Christians,

(s) *Porphyr. de Abstinencia ab Animal. l. 2. cap. 51. Justin. Apol. 1. D. Cass. l. 73. p. 838.*

(t) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 7. cap. 10. vide l. 8. cap. 14.*

(u) *Euseb. Vita Constant. l. 1. cap. 36.*

(w) *Καὶ τέλος αἱ πρὸς συνίστασθαι, αἱ καὶ σπαραγμοὺς καὶ παῖδας καὶ αἰδύων ἀφ' ὧν, ἀρρετὰς καὶ θηλείας, καὶ ἄλλων σκελῶν ἀπογίνεσθαι. Socras. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. cap. 13.*

(x) *Apol. 1.*

(y) *Epod. 5. In Canidiam Venescam. Vide Juvenal. Sat. 6. vers. 553.*

it may with justice enough, be retorted upon the heathens themselves. And since 'tis very natural, for men to form a judgment of other mens behaviour, by their own; and from a parity of circumstances, to conclude a likeness of action; it will be no extravagant, and improbable supposition, if we make the inhuman cruelties of the heathens, the genuine, and original foundation of the second calumny, against the Christians.

This conjecture is supported by two very plausible reasons. First, The Christians were accounted a pack of infamous conspirators, and sworn enemies to *Cæsar*. At their night meetings, they were suspected to be plotting against the empire, and forming of villainous confederacies against the publick peace. They were suppos'd to carry a mortal hatred towards all men, excepting those of their own persuasion; and to promote the interest of the Christian society, by the vilest, clandestine arts. Now if it was a customary thing amongst the pagan conspirators, to drink human blood, in order to engage one another, to act with greater secrecy, and fidelity; why may we not suppose, that the heathens accus'd the Christians of infanticide, and of drinking human blood, only because they look'd upon them as traitors, and conspirators? Nay it can scarce be imagin'd, why they shou'd think, that the Christians were conspirators, without supposing at the same time, that they took

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the



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the same precautions, and pursu'd the same methods, that other conspirators did.

*Secondly*, The Christians were represented as forcerers, and magicians; and even our blessed Lord, and his Apostles did not escape that censure (z): And since we have undeniable proof, that the heathen magicians were guilty of infanticide, there is still the greater probability, that the second calumny was originally deriv'd, from the scandalous practices, amongst the heathens themselves.

But tho' the imputation of infanticide, and of drinking human blood, may thus be accounted for, with a tolerable semblance of reason, and truth; yet it may be question'd, whether the charge of *Ἀνθρωποφαγία*, of eating human flesh, cou'd be deriv'd from the same cause. For, that the magicians us'd to eat of those infants, that they murder'd, is mention'd by none (as far as I remember) excepting *Socrates*; whose authority, as an historian, may be very good; yet still, what he speaks of, is very little to the purpose, as being done so late, as the reign of the Apostate *Julian*. Besides, what is reported of the conspirators of old, and particularly of *Catiline*, and his companions, looks very much like a fable: or admitting that infanticide was the practice amongst them; it is to the last

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(z) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 1. p. 30. Arnob. adv. Gent. l. 1. p. 25.*

degree improbable, that they tasted of the flesh of the murder'd infants; and especially, since this circumstance is omitted by some of the gentile historians, and the conspirators are said only to have touch'd (a) the bowels of the infant, and upon them to have sworn mutual fidelity, and assistance.

In answer to this difficulty, let it be observ'd; that it makes no difference in this matter, whether those accounts of the pagan conspirators were true, or false: any senseless tale, tho' never so ill grounded, was enough to give the gentiles a handle to traduce the Christians. The eating of human flesh was charg'd upon several of the heathens (b); and by some upon the *Catilinarian* conspirators (c). \* Now whatever foundation there might be for these reports; 'tis certain, they were common enough, and credited by a great many people: and an ill natur'd, and implacable enemy to Christianity, who look'd upon Christians, as conspirators against all civil societies, might from hence take an occasion, to calumniate the innocent Christians. Whether this was the principal, or sole foundation of the charge, I will not pretend to determine. There's no absurdity in supposing,

(a) \*Ορκον ὁμόσαι μέγαν ἔδοξε πᾶσι δεινόν, ἀνδρώπυ  
σφαμέλῃ ἐπιτεπίσαιας αἷμα, καὶ τῇ σπλαγχνῶν διγύνας.  
*Plutarch. in vit. Poplic.*

(b) *Herodot. l. 1. cap. 216. l. 3. cap. 99. Sueton. in vita  
Neron. cap. 37. Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 30. cap. 1, &c.*

(c) *Vide Dian. Cass. Hist. Rom. l. 37. Plutarch. de Cicerone.*

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that several things contributed, towards the forming, and propagating of every individual calumny. This however, I think, is evident ; that the reports concerning the pagan cannibals, if they were not the original foundation of the calumny against the Christians, gave it at least a greater appearance of truth, and made it pass more currently : for how shou'd it enter into the head of any infidel, to lay so monstrous a charge ? or how cou'd any one give credit to such abominable falsities, unless there had been some before, who had been guilty of the same practices (d) ?

The Jews were formerly charg'd with a crime, that is pretty much of the same nature, with that which is contain'd in the second calumny against the primitive Christians. The story, as told by *Apion of Alexandria*, is this. When *Antiochus Epiphanes* plunder'd the temple at *Jerusalem*, he found in it a man lying upon a bed, with a table before him, cover'd with a great variety of the choicest meats. At the sight of the king, the man fell down at his feet, and with the bitterest lamentations, implor'd his assistance. The king bad him declare who he was ; how he came there, and what was

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(d) *Nemo hoc potest credere, nisi qui possit audere. Min. Fel. p. 289. Hæc quo magis refutaverim, a vobis fieri ostendam, partim in aperto, partim in occulto, per quod forsitan & de nobis credidistis. Infantes penes Africam Saturno immolabantur. Tertul. Apol. cap. 9.*



the meaning of so many dishes of meat upon the table. The man told him, he was a Greek, and had the misfortune to be taken by the Jews, and shut up in that place, with an intention to sacrifice him when he was grown fat : for he was inform'd, by some of the servants that brought him victuals ; that it was a custom amongst the Jews, to sacrifice a Greek every year, to taste of his flesh, and swear an irreconcilable enmity towards all Greeks. And, the more effectually to move *Antiochus's* compassion, he told him he had but a few days longer to live (e). *Josephus* has sufficiently baffl'd, and expos'd the absurdity, and nonsense of this ridiculous tale : and has shown, that it came originally from the Greeks, who had a mind to justify the sacrilege of *Antiochus*, in plundering the temple ; and his base perfidiousness, in invading *Judaea* in a hostile manner, without the least provocation from the Jews, and contrary to the most solemn treaties, and engagements.

Now this reflection upon the Jewish nation, is pretty near a-kin to that, which was thrown upon the primitive Christians : and since the heathens made little or no distinction between Jews and

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(e) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2.* *Dion. Cassius* speaks of an incredible number of Greeks and Romans, that were slain, and eaten by the Jews, in *Trajan's* time. *Hist. Rom. l. 68. p. 786.*

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Christians, especially whilst Christianity was in its infancy, one would imagin, that the second accusation against the Christians, came from that old calumny upon the Jews, mention'd by *Apion*. Besides in the same place, *Apion* censures the Jews, for swearing by the great God of Heaven, and Earth, that they wou'd shew no favour to any foreigner (f): which is agreeable to the character, that the primitive Christians had given them by their Enemies.

But on the other hand; if we consider, that what *Apion* reports of the Jews, was not their general character: that in this his censure he stands alone: and that 'tis probable, the calumny was but little credited; nor so much as heard of by many; we shall not have much reason, to derive the original occasion of the second antichristian calumny, from *Apion's* scandalous reflection upon the Jews. Neither indeed, upon a strict comparison, are the calumnies exactly parallel. For the Jews were accus'd of sacrificing a man, after they had fatted him with dainty meats. The Christians were said to murder one of their own little infants. In *Apion's* story, there is no mention of drinking human blood; which is a part of the

(f) Κατα-Ἰουδαίαι δὲ τὸ ὄρεον ἡμεῖς αἱ ἀμυνόμεναι τῷ Θεῷ, ὃ ποιήσαντα τὸ ἔργον, καὶ πῶς γινώσκουσι, καὶ πῶς διαλάσαντες, μηδενὶ εὐνοήσαντες ἀλλοτρίῳ, μάστιγι δὲ Ἑλλήνων. *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2.*

calumny upon the Christians. The intention of the Jews, by that sacrifice, was to perpetuate their enmity towards the Greeks: but infanticide amongst Christians, was said to be, by way of initiating members into the Christian society. So that upon the whole, there seems to be very little, or no authority, for founding the charge of infanticide, and eating of human flesh, upon *Apion's* silly, and ridiculous story.

There is a valuable fragment of *Irenæus*, preserv'd by *Oecumenius* (g), that gives the best solution of the difficulty; and leads us towards a discovery of the true, and genuine source of that barbarous charge against the Christians, contain'd in the second article. *Irenæus* informs us (h), that the heathens apprehended the servants of some Christians, and compell'd them to declare, what evil they knew of their masters. The servants, willing to make a discovery, that might please the inquirers, declar'd, that they had heard their

(g) *Comment. ad 1 Epist. Pet. cap. 3.*

(h) Χριστιανῶν γὰρ καὶ ἡ χυμῶν δούλους Ἕλληνας συλλαβόν-  
τες, αἵ τε μαθεῖν ἢ ὅτι τούτων οὐδὲν ἀπόρητον εἶπε Χρισ-  
τιανῶν ἀναστρέφοντες, οἱ δούλοι εἴποι, μὴ ἔχοντες πῶς τὸ πῶς  
ἀναστρέφοντες καὶ ἡδυνώ εἶπεν, παρῶσον ἡκούσας τῶν δεινότητων,  
πῶς δοῖαν μὴτάλλειν αἷμα καὶ σῶμα εἶναι Χριστοῦ. αὐτοὶ  
νομίσαντες τὸ ὅτι αἷμα καὶ σῶμα εἶναι, τὸτο εἰπὼν τοῖς  
ἐκζητῶσι· οἱ δὲ λαβόντες ὡς ἀντόχημα τὸτο πλατὺς Χρι-  
στιανοῖς, καὶ δὴ τὸτο τοῖς ἄλλοις Ἕλλησιν ἐξεπόμενον, καὶ  
τὸς μαρτυρας Σάγκλον καὶ Βλανδιναν οὐμολογήσαι διὰ βασί-  
λων ἀνάγκαν. Vide Fragment. Iren. in Edit. Benedict. p. 343.



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masters speak of eating the flesh of Christ, and drinking his blood, in the holy sacrament. The heathens, who knew nothing of the nature of that sacrament, imagin'd, that the Christians did in reality eat human flesh, and drink human blood : and upon this information, they founded the calumny ; which they industriously propagated, and endeavour'd by tortures, to make the Martyrs, *Sanctus*, and *Blandina*, own the charge to be true.

It must be own'd that this relation comes from very good authority, and gives a plausible, and natural account of the occasion, and origin of the second calumny : and as the Christians were accused of worshipping *Ceres*, and *Bacchus* (i), because they ate, and drank consecrated bread, and wine, at the holy communion ; so 'tis exceeding probable, that the charge of *Anthropophagia*, was deriv'd from a grossly mistaken notion of the sacrament of the body, and blood of Christ. But there are two difficulties that want to be clear'd up. The first is this. The persecution in *Gaul*, in which *Sanctus* and *Blandina*, and a great many others suffer'd martyrdom, was in the reign of *M. Antoninus* : about the year of our Lord, 176 ; but the second calumny prevail'd long before that time. The fragment seems to have been taken from that famous letter, sent by the churches of *Lyons*, and

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(i) *Augustin. l. 20. contra Faustum Manichæum. c. 13.*

*Vienne*  
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Christ  
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and f  
Christ  
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tentio  
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*Gaul*  
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Lore

(k  
*Vale*  
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Hist.

*Vienne*, to the Christians in *Asia*, and *Phrygia*: and since the fragment is expressly ascrib'd to *Irenæus*, 'tis probable, that he was the author of that celebrated epistle (*k*); being at the same time an eminent Presbyter of the church of *Lyons*, and not long after Bishop of the same church. Now that information, given to the persecutors in *Gaul*, was not the first occasion of that odious charge upon the Christians; nor indeed does *Irenæus* say any thing like it. The heathens long before, no doubt of it, had heard something of the holy sacrament; and from thence deriv'd an occasion to abuse the Christians. The servants were put to the rack, not for the discovery of Truth; but purely with an intention to accuse the Christians: and they made such a declaration, as they were directed to make; and such, as they knew wou'd please the inquirers: nay, in that famous account of the Martyrs in *Gaul*, we find, that the soldiers prompted the servants, and directed them what discoveries to make (*l*): by which it appears, that a gross, and imperfect notion of the holy sacrament, had given occasion to censure the Christians; before the persecution in *Gaul*, which was in the year of our Lord 176.

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(*k*) Vide *Massuet. Editor. Iren. dissertat. 2. c. 60. p. 106. Vales. annotat. in L. 5. c. 1. Euseb. Hist. Eccles.*

(*l*) τῶν στρατιῶν ἐπὶ τούτῳ παρεμύνησαν αὐτός. *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. L. 5. c. 1.*

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But tho' the charge of eating human flesh, and drinking of human blood, may reasonably be deriv'd from the aforementioned cause ; yet there remains a second difficulty, how to account for the charge of infanticide : for how eating the flesh of Christ, and drinking his blood, taken in a literal sense, shou'd create a suspicion, that the Christians murder'd infants, cannot easily be conceiv'd ; and 'tis therefore probable, that the charge of Infanticide, must have some other foundation.

There are some passages in the holy scriptures, that might, when grossly misinterpreted by the heathens, give birth to that detestable calumny. There were many remarkable sayings of our blessed Lord, handed about the world ; and the sacred books of the New Testament, by some accident or other, fell into the hands of many an infidel (m). But what egregious blunders they committed, in citing the holy scriptures, *Celsus* is a remarkable instance ; whose mistakes, and misconstructions are so numerous, and great, that one would almost suspect, that he had never seen the Apostolical writings (n). The passage, that seems most likely, to have occasion'd the calumny, is this.

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(m) *Inspice Dei voces, literas nostras, quas neq; ipsi suppressimus, & pleriq; casus ad extraneos transferunt. Tertul. Apol. cap. 31.*

(n) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 1. p. 47, 56.*



Then Jesus said unto them, verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you (o).

Now suppose an ignorant heathen had accidentally seen, or heard of this passage : the observations that he would naturally make upon it, would have been these. 1. Whoever was meant by the son of man, he would take him to be a person distinct from the holy Jesus. 2. By son of man, he would not have understood a man, or an adult person : for, as every man is the son of some other man, he must have look'd upon this interpretation, as downright nonsense, or at least a foolish circumlocution : by *filius hominis* then, he would have understood a man's male child. 3. This command of eating and drinking flesh, and blood, he could not take in any other than a literal sense. And lastly, he would observe, that this eating, and drinking, is made a necessary condition, of enjoying life, or happiness ; and would therefore conclude ; that it was a sacred, and initiatory rite, or sacrifice, amongst Christians. The result of these observations is this. The Lord Jesus Christ, under pain of his highest displeasure, commanded his followers (who religiously obey'd all his commands) to kill a male child, or infant ; and to eat of his flesh, and drink of his blood : and this was

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(o) St. John 6. 53.

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to be done by way of Initiation ; or to qualify men, for the enjoyment of that happiness, which the Lord Jesus promised to all those, that were his true disciples. This is exactly the substance of the second calumny upon the primitive Christians.

I cannot tell whether the baptizing of infants, which, 'tis generally suppos'd, was the practice in the first ages of Christianity, might not occasion, or at least confirm the suspicion of infanticide. 'Tis true, there is nothing in nature more different, than the initiatory sacrament of baptism, by which infants, as well as others, were made members of the Christian society, and the pretended crime contain'd in the second calumny : however it must be observ'd ; that as infants by baptism were admitted into the Christian covenant, so the infanticide charg'd upon the Christians was said to be their method of Initiation. *Cecilins* says, *de initiandis tirunculis, fabula tam detestanda, quam nota est. Concerning the initiating of novices, there is a story equally detestable, and notorious* (p). Now since the infidels judg'd by appearances, and founded their accusations upon trifling circumstances, and very imperfect relations ; might not the suspicion of infanticide proceed, from the primitive practice of baptizing of infants? For, if the infidels had heard, that the Christians ate human flesh, and

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(p) *Min. Felin.*

drank human blood ; and had also heard, that infants were carried to the Christian priest : they must naturally conclude, that those very infants were sacrific'd. And hence perhaps came that monstrous fable of infanticide. To an Antipædobaptist, who fixeth the origin of Infant Baptism much later than the Apostolick age, this conjecture must appear groundless, and trifling ; and perhaps others will entertain the same sentiments about it : but I think my self oblig'd, whilst I am inquiring into the original grounds, and causes of those abominable reflections thrown upon the primitive Christians, to set down every thing (being in want of substantial Evidence and authority) that carries any appearance of probability.

I have sometimes thought, that the decree made by the Apostles at Jerusalem (9), might contribute something towards the propagating of the first, and second antichristian calumny. The Apostolical decree enjoyns an abstinence from blood, from things strangled, and from fornication. Upon which a heathen would naturally put the following construction ; if he had receiv'd any previous hints, that the Christians were tax'd with eating human

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(9) *Acts* 15. 29.



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flesh, with drinking human blood, and with promiscuous, and incestuous copulation. ἀπ' ἀνθρώπου, that is from drinking of human blood. καὶ πνιγῆς, from eating of human flesh, or strangled infants. καὶ πορνείας, and from incestuous lusts. The word πορνεία, tho' in its primary, and more obvious acceptation, it signifies fornication; yet does it also denote, every species, and degree of lust, and impurity. In this sense, it is us'd several times by St. Paul (r): and speaking of the incestuous Corinthian, he expressly calls his crime πορνεία (s). It is reported commonly (t) that there is fornication among you (πορνεία), and such fornication (πορνεία) as is not so much as named amongst the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

(r) *Theff.* 4. 3. *Rom.* 1. 29. Πάντων ἀπὸ τῶ ἀκαθάρτου καὶ τῆς πορνείας ὀνόματι ἐκαλεῖται. *Theophylact. Comment. ad Rom.* 1. 29.

(s) *1 Corinth.* 5. 1.

(t) Dr. *Whitby*, in his notes upon this place, observes; that the crime of the incestuous Corinthian, censur'd by St. Paul, probably gave occasion, to that vile reflection of unnatural Lusts, thrown upon the primitive Christians. The learned Doctor builds his conjecture upon these words, ὅπως ἀκούεται, it is every where heard of, or it is a common report. But allowing that the report was got amongst the Infidels as well as Christians; which yet there is no necessity to suppose: I can think it by no means probable, that the crime of one single Christian, shou'd occasion so universal, and so lasting a calumny; and especially, when the offender was justly animadverted upon, by the seasonable interposition of St. Paul; and thereby an effectual stop put, to that infamous practice.

If it shou'd be objected, that the Christians paid the strictest regard to all the Apostolical directions; and that therefore it must be unreasonable, to suspect the Christians guilty of such crimes, as are expressly condemn'd by the Apostles. The answer is, that a prohibition implies a preceding practice; and that an Apostolical decree wou'd have been unnecessary, and impertinent, if none had been guilty of such things, as are thereby prohibited. A candid and impartial man, wou'd no more have founded a charge of incest, and infanticide upon this Apostolical decree; than of treason, perjury, or any other great, and capital offence: but nothing but the foulest, and most disingenuous practices, were to be expected from bigotted, and implacable enemies to Christianity. They embraced every opportunity: improv'd every hint, to the disadvantage, and discredit of the Christian cause. Boldly, and impudently censur'd, what they did not understand: and without evidence, or probability; and contrary to justice, or reason, tax'd the Christians with the grossest enormities. And whilst they were under the influence of such prejudices, and wicked dispositions, we may I think, reasonably suppose, that as there is some seeming resemblance, between those practices prohibited by the Apostolical decree, and the pretended crimes objected to the Christians; so the heathens might from hence take a handle to calumniate the innocent Christians, and derive that heavy load

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load of infamy, contain'd in the first, and second article of accusation.

To sum up what has been said upon the imputation of infanticide, and of eating human flesh. There is little or no reason to imagin, that the second calumny was occasion'd by the hereticks, in the first ages of the Church. For tho' the *Gnosticks*, *Montanists*, and *Simonians*, are by some tax'd with infanticide, &c. yet in the most early, and authentick accounts of them, no such charge appears. As several things were formerly branded with the odious title of heresy, which, in my opinion, deserv'd a more favourable, and softer appellation : so the hereticks themselves (tho' justly charg'd with many errors, and impieties) have in several particulars been misrepresented, and abus'd.

Nor is there any better reason for deriving this calumny, from *Apion's* idle tale of a Greek, that was annually murder'd, and eaten by the Jews. For that reflection upon the Jews, seems to have been stifled in its infancy : to have been but little credited ; nor so much as heard of, by many : and besides, this calumny upon the Jews, differs in many remarkable particulars, from that vile imputation cast upon the primitive Christians.

The fragment of *Irenæus*, seems to discover the true and genuine foundation, of the charge of *Anthropophagia*, of eating human flesh, and drinking human blood : and 'tis not impossible, that the practices of the pagan conspirators, and magicians  
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(such as the Christians were slanderously reported to be) might also contribute, towards forming of the calumny. As to the charge of infanticide : whether it came from the necromancers, and magicians : or from a misinterpretation, of the above-mention'd passage, in St. *John's* Gospel : or from the practice of baptizing of infants : or from all of them together, I leave to the learned reader to determine.

If we look into the character, and behaviour of a primitive Christian, we shall readily discover, the foul injustice, and unreasonableness of the charge of infanticide, and eating of human flesh. Whilst the heathens made no scruple to drown, or strangle their infants : to expose them to birds, and beasts of prey : or to suffer them to perish by hunger, and cold (u) : the Christians brought up their children with the utmost tenderness, and care. They were so far from complying with the cruel, but fashionable custom, of murdering their issue ; that they look'd upon all attempts to procure abortion, whether they succeeded or no, as intentional homicide (w). *Nobis homicidium nec*

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(u) *Min. Fel.* p. 289. vide *Athenag. Legat. Justin. Apol.* 1. *Dionys. Hal.* l. 2. *Plin.* l. 10. *Epist.* 71, 72. *Terent. Hecyr. Seneca de Ira.* l. 1. c. 15. *Plut. in Lycurgo.*

(w) *Nobis* vero homicidio semel interdicto, etiam conceptum utero, dum adhuc sanguis in hominem delibatur, dissolvere non licet. *Tertul. Apol. cap.* 9. vide *Athenag. Legat.* p. 38.

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*videre fas est* (x). They accounted it a crime even to see a man kill'd ; and though it was done, by way of punishment for capital crimes, and after a legal conviction (y). Barely to look on, whilst a man was slain, they took for a sort of approbation of the fact ; and the spectator was in some measure involv'd, in the guilt of homicide (z). For this reason they never went to see the gladiators, nor any of those bloody, and inhuman diversions, that the heathens were much delighted with (a).

As for drinking of human blood, 'tis a most astonishing charge, and the grossest lye that could have been invented. In obedience to the Apostolical decree, the first Christians carefully abstain'd from the blood of all animals : and from eating the flesh of strangled animals, and of those that dy'd by any accidental hurt, or distemper. Hence the Martyr *Biblis* cry'd out, whilst under tortures, *how is it possible, that Christians shou'd eat little children, who are not permitted so much as to taste the blood of any irrational animal* (b) ? This the heathens were very well acquainted with ; and therefore

(x) *Min. Fel.* p. 299.

(y) Ὅς γὰρ ἵππων ἐδ' ἰδεῖν καὶ θηρίων φονδύλων ἑταίρων, τέτων τίς ἀν' ἡλείπει ἢ ἀνδραφονίαν ἢ ἀνδραφονοσίαν. *Athenag.* p. 38.

(z) Quod si interesse homicidio sceleris conscientia est, & eodem facinore spectator obstrictus est, quo & admissor, &c. *Lactant. Epitome.* cap. 6. vide l. 6. *de vero cultu.* cap. 20.

(a) Vide *Theoph. ad Autolyc.* l. 3. *Tertul. de Spectac. de Idololatr.* *Min. Fel.* p. 343.

(b) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles.* l. 5. c. 1.

amongst

amongst other experiments for the discovery of Christians, this was one. They fill'd a bottle, or bladder with blood, and put it to a man's mouth, to see whether he wou'd taste it, or no (c).

We learn from the Apologists, and others, that the first Christians consider'd the prohibition of blood, and things strangled, as of a standing, perpetual; and unchangeable obligation (d): and that this opinion, almost universally prevail'd, for a great many Years. Which by the way is something surprizing; when the great Apostle of the Gentiles, had given a different determination of this matter; and had declar'd for the legality, even of eating things offer'd to idols, provided it was done without giving offence to a weak brother (e).

One of those Canons stil'd Apostolical, inflicts a severe penalty upon those, that presume to eat blood (f): and the Greek church, which always had those ancient rules in great veneration, even to this day, prohibits the eating of blood, and things strangled; and condemns the contrary prac-

(c) Denique inter Tentamenta Christianorum, botulos etiam cruore distentos admovetis. *Tertul. Apol. c. 9.*

(d) *Tertul. Apol. c. 9. Min. Fel. p. 300. Clem. Alex. Pedagog. L. 3. c. 3. Origen. contra Cels. L. 8. p. 396, 397. Lucian. de morte Peregr. p. 597.*

(e) *1. Corinth. 8.*

(f) *Can. 63. vide Can. 2. Concil. Gangr. Can. 67. Synod. Trull.*



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tice of the western churches (g). Nay in the Latin church, even so late as the beginning of the eighth century ; we find *Gregory* the third, bishop of *Rome*, prohibiting *Morticina*, or the eating of animals, whose blood was not extracted (h). Indeed *St. Austin* (i), and some others about his time, take the Apostolical decree in a different sense : but 'tis certain, that for a great many years ; blood, and things strangled, were reputed unlawful food, and *Clement* of *Alexandria* speaks the sentiments, of almost all the Christians in the world, at that time, when he says, *ὁ δὲ θίγειν αἷμα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις θύμι.* *It is not lawful for men to touch blood* (k).

By what reasons those worthy Christians conducted their practice, I shall not now enquire. All that I would infer from hence is, the monstrous injustice, and unreasonableness of the charge. For, that the Christians shou'd drink human blood, and at the same time religiously abstain, from the blood of any irrational animal ; when no imaginable reason cou'd be assign'd, but what would hold infinitely stronger, against the former, than the latter : that the best of men shou'd eat the flesh of

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(g) Vide *Balsamon. Scholia in Canon. Apostol. 63. Leon. Allat. de consens. Eccles. Orient. & Occident. L. 3. c. 14.*

(h) *Canon. Penitent. Greg. tertii. c. 30.*

(i) *Contra Faust. Manicheum. L. 32. c. 13. Tom. 6.*

(k) *Pædagog. L. 3. c. 3.*

murder'd

murder'd infants ; which perhaps was never done by any people in the world, or at least, only by such savage monsters, as were perfect strangers to all religion, and the common duties of humanity : that Christians, I say, shou'd be guilty of this, is shocking to common understanding. The heathens, 'tis said, sometimes drank human blood, for the cure of the Epilepsy (1) : but it is not so much as pretended, that the Christians drank it by way of medicine. In a word, the calumny carries its confutation along with it : 'tis a fable big with absurdities, and contradiction ; and whoever can give it any credit, may upon more probable grounds believe, that the Jews formerly here in *England* crucify'd infants : nay must be prepar'd for the belief of the most false, and romantick tale, that can possibly be invented by man.

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(1) *Quidam jugulati Gladiatoris calido sanguine potati morbo se liberarunt. Celsus de morbo Comitiali. L. 3. c. 23. Vide Plin. Nat. Hist. L. 28. c. 1. Min. Fel. p. 299. Terrul. Apol. c. 9.*



## CHAP. V.

### *The charge of Atheism accounted for.*

**I** Come now to the last of those three original calumnies, which I suppose, to be as old as Christianity it self, or very near it. The charge of Atheism undoubtedly commenc'd, as soon as there were any Christians in the world. For, whilst it was the practice, as well as the Duty of the primitive Christians, to maintain the unity of the Godhead : to explode the idolatrous worship, and condemn the Polytheism of the heathen world : they must unavoidably subject themselves to the imputation of Atheism, and impiety. If the pagans were sincere in their belief, they cou'd not forbear censuring those, as Atheistical and prophane, who vilify'd, and treated with contempt, their fabulous Deities.

Whether we suppose that the calumny came originally from the Jews, or from the Gentiles, there is little, or no difficulty in accounting for it. To an obstinate Jew, corrupted, and blinded with vices, and prejudices (as we find they were in our blessed



bleſſed Saviours time) a Chriſtian muſt appear to be a prophane, and blaſphemous wretch. The Chriſtians indeed profeſs'd to believe in, and worſhip the one true God, the God of Iſrael : but how wou'd this be credited by the Jews ; whiſt they obſerv'd them openly, and avowedly declaring, againſt circumciſion, and other legal obſervances ; and running direſtly counter, to many of the Moſaical precepts ? They thought it a crime, of a heinous nature in *St. Paul*, who perſuaded men to worſhip God contrary to the law (a). And *St. Stephen* was charg'd with blaſphemy, againſt *Moses*, and againſt God ; for ſaying, that this *Jeſus of Nazareth* ſhall deſtroy this place, and ſhall change the cuſtoms which *Moses* deliver'd us (b). The generality of the Jews paid the ſame regard to the ceremonial law, as they did to the precepts of morality ; and the eternal rules of right reaſon : and when they found, that the Chriſtians were for abolishing all thoſe legal obſervances, and carnal ordinances, they treated them as impious blaſphemers ; as diſputing the authority of the great God of Iſrael, and in effect denying his exiſtence. In conſequence of this, immediately after our Lord's Aſcenſion, the Jews ſent meſſengers into all parts of the world, to give notice, that there was lately ſprung up a-

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(a) *Aſſ.* 18. 13.

(b) *Aſſ.* 6. 14.

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mongst them, ἄθεον χριστιανῶν, *an atheistical sect of Christians* (c).

How the heathens came to charge the Christians with Atheism is obvious enough. *Justin Martyr* assigns the reason. He says, the Christians deny'd those to be Gods, that were generally accounted so ; and maintain'd that the pagan worship was idolatrous, and not the worship of God, but of devils : ἐθένδε καὶ ἄθεοι καλέμεθα *and from hence we are called Atheists* (d). 'Tis amazing to consider, to what a pitch of stupidity and infatuation, the heathens were arriv'd, at the coming of the Messiah. They fell down to stocks and stones, and gave a sham divinity, to the worst of men, and the vilest of creatures. There was scarce an Altar in the world, dedicated to the true God; tho' in him they liv'd, and mov'd, and had their being. Their corruption in manners, was equal to their ignorance : and whilst they knew not God, they were even strangers, to the common duties of morality : so that the world never stood more in need of a Saviour ; and never deserv'd one less ; than it did at that time, when the son of God was pleas'd to descend from Heaven, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

The Apostles, and their successors, had incredible difficulties to engage with, whilst they were

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(c) *Justin. Dial. cum Tryph.* p. 235. 335.

(d) *Apol.* 1.

endeavouring

endeavouring to root out idolatry, and superstition, that were grown venerable by their great antiquity, and recommended by almost an universal practice. To turn men from the power of Satan unto God, who were influenc'd by the most obstinate and rooted prejudices, was a work, that cou'd never have been effected, without the assistance, and interposition of the omnipotent arm of God. The first planters of our holy religion, with surprising constancy and courage, asserted, that what the heathens worshipp'd, were false, and fictitious deities. This mightily exasperated the pagans, who, to vindicate the honour of their Gods, pursu'd the Christians with infernal malice; and loaded them with the vilest reproaches. They were treated, as most impious innovators in religion. As enemies to gods, and men. And upon this, the charge of Atheism became a popular, and general calumny. *Crescens* the Cynick gives this character of the Christians (e). *Lucian* supposeth a Christian and an Atheist to be the same thing (f). A great multitude of Jews and heathens, at *Polycarp's* Martyrdom, cry'd out with one voice, *ἀεὶ τὸς Ἀθεῖς*, away with the Atheists, meaning the Christians (g).

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(e) *Justin. Apol.* 2.

(f) *Pseudomant.* p. 624. *Tom.* 1.

(g) *Epist. Eccles. Smyrn. de Polycarp. Martyr.* c. 3. 9. 12.



The heathens urg'd the charge of Atheism with the greater vehemence, because they observ'd, that the Christians ridicul'd their superstitious fooleries, and all their rites and ceremonies, that had been for a long time reputed sacred. The Christians had so great an abhorrence of an idol, that they omitted no opportunity of expressing it. By way of derision and contempt, they us'd to spit at the altars, and the images of the pagan Gods. This custom is alluded to by *Tertullian* (*h*); and 'tis mention'd by *Cecilius*, as an instance of the greatest impiety (*i*). *Celsus* charges the Christians with abusing, and striking at the statues of *Jupiter*, *Apollo*, and the rest (*k*).

The irreverence and contempt that the Christians shew'd to the idol temples, was also thought to be no little aggravation of the guilt of prophane-ness, and impiety. The Christians look'd upon the heathen temples, as the habitation of devils: as publick stews, and receptacles for the most abandon'd prostitutes. But the pagans were extremely offended, to hear their temples call'd sepulchres: and when *George*, bishop of *Alexandria*, passing by a heathen temple, cry'd out, *Quamdiu*

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(*h*) *Ipsius fidei conscientiam perrogemus, quo ore Christianus thurarius si per templa transibit, quo ore fumantes aras despuit, & exsufflabit quibus ipse prospexit?*  
*De Idololat. c. 11.*

(*i*) *Deos despunt. Rident sacra. Min. Fel. p. 77.*

(*k*) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 8. p. 402.*

*sepulchrum hoc stabit? How long shall this sepulchre stand?* The enrag'd multitude fell upon him, and tore him to pieces; burnt his body, and cast the ashes into the sea (l). Several of the Christian writers indisputably prove (m), that the heathen temples, were originally funeral monuments: and that the pagan deities were in reality dead men, whose bones and ashes were deposited in the temples: this made the heathens exclaim, *Templa ut busta despiciunt.* They look upon our temples, as monuments for the dead (n). And when churches came to be erected upon the Martyrs graves, the heathens smartly enough retorted the charge, and call'd the Christian temples *τὰς τοὺς μαρτύρων*, sepulchres; and the Christians themselves, *οἱ ἐν τοῖς μαρτύροις*, those that frequented the cœmeteries, or graves of the martyrs (o).

When the Christians became numerous, and powerful, and were under the protection of the civil magistrate, many of the pagan temples were utterly demolish'd. Then the charge of Atheism run high: the heathens were quite out of patience; and cou'd not mention a Christian without rage,

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(l) *Ammian. Marcellin. l. 22. cap. 11. p. 326. vid. Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. cap. 2.*

(m) *Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Gent. cap. 3. p. 39. cap. 10. p. 74. Arnob. l. 6. p. 193, 194. Tertull. de spectac. cap. 13.*

(n) *Min. Fel. p. 77.*

(o) *Vide Julian. Misopog. Libanii Orat. funeb. Eunap. vita Edesii.*

and invective. *Libanius*, *Julian*, and others (p), display their rhetorick upon this head : and *Eunapius* can neither keep within the bounds of truth, nor decency, when he mentions the demolition, of the famous temple of *Serapis* at *Alexandria* (q).

The great miseries and hardships the Christians underwent, help'd forward the calumny of Atheism; being esteem'd the just consequence, of some egregious impiety. The heathens ascrib'd all their happiness, and success to their piety towards their gods : and all their misfortunes, and disappointments to prophaneness, and negligence in their superstitious worship. The prodigious extent, and the flourishing state of the Roman empire, they imputed to this : that whilst other nations had their particular deities, the Romans worshipp'd all (r). 'Twas this that brought (as they foolishly imagin'd) the whole world in subjection to the Roman laws. 'Twas this that kept *Hannibal* from their gates, and the *Gauls* from the Capitol (s). Hence they blasphem'd the great God of Israel, when the Jews became a conquer'd people : when their power was gone into captivity, and their beauty into the enemies hand (t). And for the same reason, and

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(p) Vide *Julian. & Liban. opera.*

(q) *Eunap. vit. Aedes. p. 77, 78.*

(r) *Miu. Fel. p. 49. Valer. max. l. 1. cap. 1. Tertull. Apol. cap. 25.*

(s) *Symmach. Epist. l. 10. Epist. 54. p. 539.*

(t) *Min. Fel. p. 94. Cic. pro Flacco. Joseph. contra Apion. l. 3. p. 1067. Cyril. contra Julian. l. 6. Julian. Fragment. p. 543.*



with equal justice, they tax'd the Christians with Atheism. They saw them involv'd in troubles, and difficulties: seemingly in a starving, and forlorn condition: and tortur'd with the most shocking cruelties, and they drew this wicked, and blasphemous conclusion, that the God the Christians worshipp'd, was not able to deliver them (u): and that their own Gods wou'd give them no assistance; since the Christians had affronted them in the grossest manner, by denying their existence: by exploding their worship: insulting their images; and by prophaning their temples, and altars.

This calumny continu'd much longer, than any of the rest: nor is this at all to be wondred at, since it can scarce be imagin'd; how the Christians shou'd at any time escape the censure of Atheism, whilst there were any idolaters in the world. The charge of incest, and infanticide, must be dropp'd in time: since the infidels cou'd not but meet with repeated opportunities, of discovering the falsity of it: but so long as there were any people, that worshipp'd a plurality of Gods, the charge of Atheism wou'd fall upon the Christians. Hence we find in the fourth century the Emperor *Julian* (who attempted to re-establish idolatry, and superstition upon their old foundation) calling the Christian religion emphatically, τὴν Ἀθεϊστικὴν, the *Atheism*: and the Christians, sometimes *Atheists*,

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(u) *Min. Fel.* p. 102, 103.

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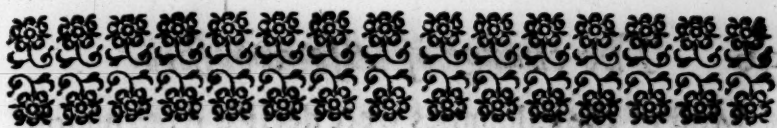
and sometimes *Galilaans* (w). It must be own'd, that the pagans were sincere in prosecuting the charge of Atheism; and that they really believ'd those to be the wickedest of monsters, who derided their gods: and this was the fatal source, of all those barbarous cruelties, that the primitive Christians met with. Long before the coming of our Saviour, it was reputed a capital crime to speak irreverently of the gods. *Socrates* was sentenc'd to die as an Atheist, by a decree of the *Athenian* senate. *Diagoras*, and *Protagoras* were severely punish'd, for deriding the sacred mysteries; and speaking disrespectfully of the gods: and *Anaxagoras* the *Clazomenian* suffer'd death, for asserting, that the Sun (which was generally worshipp'd as a god of the first class) was nothing but a red hot stone (x).

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(w) *Julian. Epist.* 59. p. 203. *Fragment.* p. 528. *Misopog.* p. 90, 95, 98.

(x) *Joseph. contra Apion.* l. 2. p. 1079. *Tull. de nat. Deor.* l. 1. *Theoph. ad Autol.* l. 3.

CHAP.



## CHAP. VI.

*The charge of κεφαλολατρεία, or of worshipping the Head of an Ass accounted for.*

WHEN this Calumny took it's first rise, I cannot precisely determine : but 'tis evident enough, that it was of a much later date, than any of those that I have already attempted to account for : since neither *Justin*, *Theophilus*, nor *Athenagoras*, take any notice of it. *Tertullian* is the first that mentions it; and *Minucius Felix* (who wrote (a) about the same time) is the last. From whence one wou'd conjecture, that this silly and absurd calumny, was but of a very short continuance : and indeed who can imagine, that so stupid a fiction shou'd be kept up, and propagated for any considerable time ? and especially, when it cannot be suppos'd, that any pagan could believe this charge to be true, without offering the greatest violence to his own understanding.

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(a) Vide *Conv. Hist. Lit. D. Allix. dissertat. de vit. & script. Tertull.*



## 96 *The charge of Afs-worship*

Most of the calumnies were deriv'd from remote hints, and occasional appearances : from foul misconstructions put upon the actions, and behaviour of a Christian : but this one would take, to be purely the invention of some base, and malicious heathen. *Tertullian* speaks of an infamous Gladiator, who expos'd a picture with this inscription ; *Onochoetes*, the God of the Christians (*b*). The picture represented a monster, that had Afs's ears, a hoof on one foot, a book in one hand, and was cloath'd with a gown. Whether this occasion'd the calumny, I will not say : but it is not improbable, that it had some such foundation. An Afs was generally accounted a vile and contemptible Quadruped. *Cecilius* calls it a filthy Beast (*c*). The *Ægyptians* treated it as an impure, and prophane sort of an animal (*d*) : and when they had a mind to describe a wicked, and execrable wretch, they call'd him an Afs (*e*). For this reason perhaps, the enemies of Christianity invented the stupid fable of the Afs's head ; thinking they cou'd not better describe the wickedness, stupidi-

(*b*) *Apol. cap. 16.*

(*c*) *Min. Fel. p. 83.*

(*d*) Τὸν ὄνον ἔχοντα, ἀλλὰ δαιμονικὸν ἡγούμενος ζῷον εἶναι. *Plutarch. de Isid. & Osir. p. 268.*

(*e*) Τῶν περσιῶν βασιλέων ἐχθραίνοντες μάλιστα τὸν ὄνον ὡς ἐναγὺ καὶ μαρὸν, ὄνον ἐπωνόμασαν. *Ibid.* Apud *Ægyptios*, asini nomen obiectare, magnum est ingerere probrum, quod Typhonis hostis Osiridis colorem ferret. *Alex. ab Alex. l. 4. p. 1200. cap. 26. Vide cap. 2. l. 4. p. 876.*

ty, and folly of the Christians; nor more effectually ridicule their religion, than by making the most contemptible of animals, the object of their worship.

Some are of opinion (f), that the first occasion for this vile reflection upon the Christian worship, was given by the hereticks; some of whom worshipp'd a fictitious Angel, or dæmon, under the shape of an Ass. The *Valentinians*, *Basiliadians*, and others of the *Gnostick* heresy, had a strange mysterious *Cabala* amongst them; which they maintain'd, was unintelligible to every body but themselves (g). From a Mystical interpretation of strange words; and a conjunction of certain numerical letters, they invented a great many heavens, and angels, or governours of them; to whom they gave different names, and different offices (h): and the generation, or production of those several imaginary powers, is just such a stupid tale, as the poetical genealogy of the heathen gods. The hereticks call'd *Ophiani* (from their worshipping of a serpent) in conformity to the *Gnostick* scheme, had their seven heavens, and so many angels, or presidents over them. In the first Heaven they plac'd *Michael*, in the shape of a Lyon. In the second *Suricles*, in the shape of a Bull. In the third *Raphael* presided

(f) Vide Ouzelii Not. in *Officia*. Min. Fel. p. 83.

(g) *Iren. contra hares.* L. 1. c. 4.

(h) *Iren. L. 1. c. 24. c. 30.*

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under the form of a Serpent. In the fourth *Gabriel*, who was like an Eagle. In the fifth *Thauthabaoth*, who had the shape of a Bear. In the sixth *Erataoth*, in the shape of a Dog. And in the seventh *Onoel*, or *Thartharaoth*, under the similitude of an Ass (i). There were other hereticks, who call'd the Governour of the seventh heaven *Sabaoth* (k). *Epiphanius*, speaking of the *Gnosticks*, acquaints us, that some of them gave to *Sabaoth* the shape of an Ass: and others the shape of an hog: and for this reason imagin'd, that the Jews were prohibited the eating of hogs flesh (l). This *Sabaoth*, according to the *Gnostic* scheme, was the creator of heaven, and earth; and of all those angels and powers that were subject to his jurisdiction.

What has been said of the *Ophiani*, is chiefly taken from *Celsus*, and confirm'd by the unquestionable authority of *Origen*; who made it his business to be rightly acquainted with the errors, and absurdities of those hereticks (m): and as to what *Epiphanius* says of *Sabaoth*, in the shape of an Ass, &c. it carries the greater air of probability, as it is supported by the testimony of *Theodore* (n). Nay

(i) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 6. p. 295. vide Spencer. Annotat.*

(k) *Epiphan. de Hæres. Archontic. cap. 2. p. 293. cap. 5. p. 295.*

(l) *Φασι δὲ τὸ Σαβωαθὶ οἱ μὲν οὖν μορφὴν ἔχουσιν, οἱ δὲ χοίρε. de Hæres. Gnostic. cap. 10. p. 91.*

(m) *Contra Cels. l. 6. p. 296, 297.*

(n) *Hæres. Fab. l. 1. de Archontic.*



*Origen* too mentions *Sabaoth*, as one of those fictitious gods, or governours (o): and what comes nearest of all to the calumny upon the Christians, we learn from the same author, that some of those governours were represented *ὡς ὀνοκεφάλαις*, as having an *Ass's head* (p). From whence it appears, that what was charg'd upon the Christians in general, was in a great measure true, of some of the hereticks: and since it was an usual thing with the pagans (and what is loudly complain'd of by all the Apologists) to throw the odium of all heretical nonsense, and blasphemies, upon the whole Christian society (q): 'tis probable enough, that the hereticks gave a handle for the charge of *Onolatria*.

But the best way to discover the true, and original foundation of the charge, will be to inquire into those calumnies, that were formerly thrown upon the Jewish nation: from whence this upon the Christians was deriv'd. I speak this with the greater assurance, having *Tertullian* on my side (r); who is the more competent a witness in this case, as living at the time, when the calumny of *Onolatria* was first broach'd.

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(o) *Contra Cels.* l. 6. p. 296. Vide *Iren.* l. 1. cap. 30.

(p) *L.* 6. p. 300.

(q) *Celsus* blasphemes the Christian Name on account of the *Ophiani*. *Origen. contra Cels.* l. 6. p. 294, 5, 6, 7, 8.

(r) *Apol.* cap. 16.

## 100 *The charge of Afs-worship*

There never was any people under the heavens (excepting the primitive Christians) so grossly abused, and so shamefully misrepresented, as the Jews were, even by authors of tolerable credit, and reputation. There is scarce any one heathen writer, that mentions the Jews, without fastening some egregious falshood upon them: without some romantick and fabulous account of their laws, and religion, their manners and customs, their temple and their sacrifices. A Jew is always represented, under the odious character of an Atheist, and a declar'd enemy to mankind (s). One that was oblig'd by solemn Oaths (t), and by the express directions of *Moses* (u), to shew no pity, nor favour, to any stranger whatsoever. Whenever any prophane author undertakes to give an historical account of the origin, and antiquity of the Jewish nation, or of their deliverance from Ægyptian captivity, we are to expect nothing but some silly, senseless tale, and the foulest of reproaches, and calumnies.

To begin with *Justin*, the Epitomizer of *Trogus Pompeius*. He says, the Jews came originally from *Damascus*, the capital of *Syria*, where *Abraham*,

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(s) Ἀπολλώνιος — ὡς Ἀθεῖς καὶ μισανθρώπος λοιδορεῖ.  
*Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2. p. 1069. Vide Tacit. Hist. l. 5. Dio-*  
*dor. Sic. l. 34. Eclog. 1. l. 40. Eclog. 1.*

(t) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 2. p. 1067.*

(u) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. 1. p. 1058.*

and *Israel* were kings. What he says of *Joseph* being in *Ægypt*, is pretty consistent with sacred history, but the reason he gives for the children of *Israel* leaving the land of *Ægypt*, is a vile fable. The *Ægyptians*, he says, had a scabby distemper amongst them; and fearing the contagion wou'd make a further progress, they banish'd all that were infected, along with *Moses*, the son of *Joseph*, who conducted this distemper'd, and miserable multitude, for seven days together fasting, through the desarts of *Arabia*, till they came to Mount *Sina*, where they met with refreshment. There *Moses*, in remembrance of their deliverance from famine, appointed every seventh day, to be kept as a fast for ever: and because he was afraid, lest the nauseous distemper amongst his people, and the reason of their expulsion from *Ægypt*, shou'd make them odious and contemptible; he prohibited all commerce, and society with strangers: and what he did upon prudential reasons, and to avoid infamy and reproach, became a religious observance (w).

What *Lyfimachus* says, is still at a greater distance from truth, and a severer reflection upon the Jewish nation. The Jews in *Ægypt*, in the reign of *Bocchoris*, he says, were sorely afflicted with the Leprosy, and other distempers; and fled to the

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(w) *Justin. Hist. l. 36. cap. 2. Vide Diodor. Sic. l. 34. Eclog. 1. l. 40. Eclog. 1.*



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temples to beg their bread. The contagion spread, and a great mortality, and famine ensued. Whilst *Ægypt* was in this calamitous condition; King *Bocchoris* consulted the Oracle; and was answer'd, that the temples must be clear'd of those impure, and wicked wretches, the Jews: that the Lepers must be drown'd, and the rest of the Jews turn'd out a starving, into the Wilderness. The King religiously pursued the directions of the Oracle: he order'd the Lepers to be wrapp'd up in sheets of lead, and thrown into the sea; and the uninfected multitude he drove out by an armed force, into the wilderness. It was *Moses's* advice to those miserable exiles, to march together in one body, till they came to some inhabited country: to shew no kindness, to give no wholsom advice to any mortal living, to throw down the altars, and temples of the Gods, wherever they met with them. The people submitted to *Moses's* directions; and under his conduct went forward, burning and plundering the temples, till they came to *Judæa*: where they built the city *Hierosula*, so call'd from their plundering of the temples: but observing, that this name might occasion reproach, and perpetuate their infamy, they chang'd it to *Hierosolyma* (x).

*Strabo,*

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(x) *Joseph. contra Apion. l. i. p. 1058.* To prevent repetition, I designedly omit what *Manatho* and *Apion* say, about the *Israelites* coming out of *Ægypt*. But I cannot pass by *Apion's* extravagant fiction, about the Institution of the Jewish

*Strabo*, an author of great judgment, and candour, makes some mistakes, in giving an account of the Jewish nation. He says it was reported, that the Jews were of an *Ægyptian* extraction, and that *Moses* was an *Ægyptian* priest. He takes abstinence from certain meats; circumcision, and other legal ceremonies, to be a superstitious degeneracy from the *Mosaick* institutions. He speaks of *Moses* with reverence and honour; and finely describes, what sentiments he had of the supreme Being. His successors too he mentions with applause, calling them *men truly religious* (y).

There can scarce be any thing imagin'd more extravagant, and silly, than *Plutarch's* calumny upon the Jews. He had heard (z), that they religi-

Jewish Sabbath. He says, when the Jews had travell'd six days together, they were seiz'd with Buboes, or Swellings in the Groin; and for this reason they rested on the seventh day when they came into the land of *Judæa*. And they call'd the seventh day *Sabbath*, because, in the *Ægyptian* language, *Sabbatosis* signifies Βεῦσσις ἄλγος, the distemper of the Groin. *Jos. cont. Ap. l. 2.*

(y) *Strab. Geograph. l. 16. p. 523, 4.*

(z) This was very well known to the heathens, who made it the subject of prophane mirth, and drollery. Cum audisset (Augustus) inter pueros, quos in Syria Herodes rex Judæorum intra bimatum jussit interfici, filium quoque ejus occisum: ait; melius est Herodis porcum esse, quam filium. *Macrob. Saturnal. l. 2. cap. 4.*

Et vetus indulget senibus Clementia Porcis. *Juvenal Sat. 6. vers. 161.*

Nec distare putant humana carne suillam. *Sat. 14.*

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ously abstain'd from swines flesh, and made it a question, whether this abstinence proceeded from their adoration, or abhorrence of that nasty animal: and since they thought it as great a crime (as he supposeth) to kill that animal, as it was to eat it, he gravely concludes for their adoration of it; and adds, as the Jews worship an ass, that shew'd them the way to a fountain of water, when they were ready to perish with thirst in the wilderness: so they worship an hog, as being the inventor of ploughing, and sowing (a).

*Tacitus* throws many severe, and satyrical reflections upon the Jews. That celebrated historian, bigotted to pagan Polytheism, and superstition, grossly abuses, and misrepresents both Jews, and Christians; for which one of the Fathers (b) gives him the title of *mendaciorum loquacissimus*, the greatest of liars. After he has recited several fables, concerning the Origin of the Jewish nation, he proceeds to the reason of their banishment out of *Agypt*: wherein he copies exactly after *Lyfimachus*. When the exiles were in a desponding, and melancholy condition, *Moses*, he says, advises them to follow him as their guide; and to look for no assistance, either from the Gods, or from Men. The people consented, and went forward, with *Moses*

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(a) *Sympof. 4. cap. 5.*

(b) *Tertul. Apol. cap. 16. Vide Famian. Strad. Prolus. 2. Lib. 1.*



at the head of them. But in their travels, they were so distress'd for want of water, that the whole multitude was upon the point of expiring. In this distress, *Moses* very luckily observ'd some wild asses, that were going to drink: he follow'd 'em, and found out great plenty of water. In gratitude to those beasts, that sav'd the whole multitude from imminent destruction, the statue of an ass, was afterwards erected, in the temple at *Jerusalem*. For six days together the people journeyed, and on the seventh, happily arriv'd at that place, where they built their city, and their temple: and because the seventh day put a period to a laborious, and miserable peregrination, *Moses* ordain'd, that every seventh day shou'd be kept as a Sabbath, or day of rest. The Jews won't eat of a hog, because that animal is very liable to the same distemper of the scab, or leprosy, with which the Jews were afflicted in *Egypt*. There are several more calumnies in the same author, which it wou'd be too tedious to mention (c).

*Dion Cassius* very justly observes (d), that the Jews had no statue in their temple at *Jerusalem*; because it was their opinion, that Almighty God cou'd not be describ'd, or represented by any visible, corporeal appearance whatsoever. He mightily extols the beauty, and magnificence of the ho-

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(c) *Hist. L. 5.*

(d) *Lib. 37. p. 37. Vide Diodor. Sic. l. 40. p. 922.*

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ly temple ; and onely finds fault with it in this particular, that the outer courts had no roof, or covering, and were expos'd to the open air. Hence came that calumny upon the Jews, mention'd by *Juvenal* (e).

*Nil prater nubes, & cali numen adorant.*

*They worship nothing but the clouds, and the heavens:*

When *Antiochus* prophan'd, and sacrilegiously plunder'd the holy temple ; he found in it (as *Diodorus Siculus* (f) has it) a stone statue, representing a man with a long beard, riding upon an Afs, which he took to be *Moses*. *Apion* tells us, *Antiochus* found in the temple, the Afs's head, which the Jews worshipp'd, made of gold, and of a very considerable value (g). The same fabulous author tells a silly story of one *Zabidus*, an inhabitant of *Dora* ; who by a cunning stratagem, stole this golden head out of the temple (h). *Damocritus*, an historian, charges the Jews, not only with worshipping the golden head of an Afs, but also with offering up human sacrifices to it : every seventh

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(e) *Sat.* 14. Vide *Origen. cont. Cels.* l. 5. p. 234. Vide *Diodor. Sic.* l. 40. *Eclog.* p. 922.

(f) *L.* 34. *Eclog.* 1. p. 901.

(g) *Joseph. contra Apion.* l. 2.

(h) *Ibid.*

year, he says, the Jews catch some stranger, whom they tear in pieces; and kill, and offer up as a sacrifice to the Afs's head (i). I have already taken notice of *Apion's* tale of a Greek, that was annually sacrific'd, and eaten by the Jews: and to this short, historical account, of the calumnies, formerly thrown upon the Jewish nation, I shall only add, what *Suidas* reports, about a Jewish custom, viz. when any one renounces Judaism, he's oblig'd to ride on a white afs about the synagogue, on the sabbath day (k).

The true, and fundamental cause, of all those foul, and heavy aspersions upon the Jews, will in a great measure appear, by making the following observations.

*First*, It is not at all to be wondred at, that the heathens committed so many mistakes, about the origin of the Jewish nation, and the Israelites coming out of *Ægypt*; when they had no history, but what was a great deal later than that of *Moses*. The Greeks, after all their vain boasts of antiquity, were taught the use of letters by *Cadmus*, the *Phanician*, who liv'd (according to *Clement* (l) of *Alexandria*) eleven generations after *Moses*. 'Tis certain they had no exact history amongst them,

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(i) *Suidas* in voc. *Damocritus*. Vide *Suid. de Juda*.

(k) *Suid. in Zenone*.

(l) *Strom. I. p. 383*.



before the first Olympiad (*m*), when the world was above three thousand years old. Nay, if we may credit *Josephus*, their first historians, *Cadmus Milesius*, and *Acusilaus* (*n*), wrote but a little before *Xerxes's* expedition into *Greece*; which was about three hundred years after the first Olympiad, and a thousand years later than *Moses*.

*Sanhoniathon*, the ancient, and celebrated author of the *Phœnician* history, by *Porphyrus's* own confession (*o*), was later than *Moses*. And if we may be allow'd to form a judgment of that historian, from his account of the *Phœnician* Theology, preserv'd by *Eusebius* (*p*), he was an author too fabulous, and inconsistent, to be depended on.

*Manetho*, who seems to have been the forger of several calumnies upon the Jews, wrote his *Ægyptian* history, in the reign of *Ptolemy Philadelphus*, after the Greek translation of the Bible (*q*); and not three hundred years, before the birth of our Saviour. He undertook his history, with an intention, as some imagine (*r*), to confront the sacred history of *Moses*, and to depreciate, and vilifie its authority. He takes his fabulous account of the *Ægyptian* Dynasties, from inscriptions upon pillars,

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(*m*) *Justin. Mart. Cohortat. ad Græcos.*

(*n*) *Contra Apion. l. 1. p. 1034.*

(*o*) *Euseb. Præpar. Evangel. l. 10. cap. 8.*

(*p*) *Præpar. Evangel. l. 1. cap. 6, 10.*

(*q*) *Stillingsfleet Orig. Sacra. l. 1. c. 3.*

(*r*) *Ibid.*

and other records in the temples : and to advance the honour, and antiquity of his own nation, he begins the *Aegyptian* annals, a great many thousands of years, even before the creation of the world. *Berosus*, the author of the *Chaldaean* history, wrote about the same time with *Manetho* : and in a word, there is nor one historian, whether Greek, or Barbarian, that is comparable to *Moses* for antiquity : and when any of them attempt, to give an account of the Mosaick age, they have recourse to forgery, and fiction, to groundless, and romantick fables.

*Secondly*, The Heathens, even a great many ages after *Moses*, knew very little of the Jewish affairs : and their ignorance in the Jewish history, is to be imputed to these two causes. First, The Jews had little or no traffick, or commerce with other nations. They inhabited an inland country, and their cities were at a pretty great distance from the sea. *Josephus* observes (s), that the *Phœnicians*, *Aegyptians*, and others, who carried on a considerable trade by sea, were very well known in the world : whilst other people, that were not so commodiously situated for trade, were scarce so much as mention'd, and known to none, but their nearest neighbours. The same author further observes ; that the Greeks, and Romans, tho' at no great distance, were for a long

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(s) *Contra Apion*. l. 1 p. 1038.

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time, perfect ſtrangers to one another : and that neither *Herodotus*, nor *Thucydides*, do ſo much as mention the Romans, tho' at that time, they were a conſiderable, and flouriſhing people.

The other reaſon, why the gentiles were ſo ignorant of the Jewiſh affairs ; and guilty of ſuch miſtakes, and miſrepresentations, was this. The Jewiſh religion enjoyn'd a peculiar way of life ; and prohibited an open familiarity, and converſation with the gentiles : and the behaviour of the Jews, which was conducted by a religious principle, the heathens imputed to a hatred, and averſion that they bore to mankind. Upon this they made reprizals, and were reſolv'd to hate, and perſecute them in their turn. They represented them as declar'd enemies to mankind (t) : invented the groſſeſt fables, on purpoſe to blacken, and expoſe them ; and purſu'd them with the moſt malicious reproaches, and calumnies.

*Thirdly*, The Jews were hated, cenſur'd, and abus'd for the ſake of their religion ; which was contrary (u) to the fashionable ſentiments of the

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(t) Et Parentes malorum odimus, & eſt conditoribus urbium infamiæ, contraxiſſe aliquam pernicioſam cæteris gentem, qualis eſt primus Judaicæ ſuperſtitionis author, & Graccorum leges inviſæ. *Quintilian. Inſtitut. Orator. l. 3. cap. 9.* Vide *Joſeph. Antiquitat l. 13. cap. 16.* *Diodor. Sic. l. 34. Eclog. 1. l. 40. Eclog. 1. Eſther. Apoc. cap. 13. 4, 5.*

(u) Moſes, quo ſibi impoſterum gentem firmaret, novos ritus, contrariuſq; cæteris mortalibus indidit. *Tacit. Hiſt. Lib. 5.*



heathen world ; and condemn'd that Idolatry, that every where scandalously prevail'd. Religious differences always produce the fiercest contentions, and the most dirty calumnies ; but how must the heathens be provok'd, when the Jews, in contradiction to the common sense of mankind, worshipp'd the one great Lord, and Sovereign of the universe : and deny'd those to be gods, *whom all Asia and the world worshipp'd* ? This was look'd upon as a crime of the blackest, and most capital nature ; and that call'd for the severest punishment. This entail'd upon the Jews, the odious names of Atheism, and prophaneness ; and made *Pliny* give this character of the Jews, *Judea gens contumelia numinum insignis*. *The Jewish nation is remarkable for reproaching the gods (w).*

*Fourthly*, The Jews too often gave just grounds for censure, being guilty of several extravagancies, and follies, which were always improv'd, and magnified by their enemies, the heathens. *Josephus* gives the vilest character of his own countrymen. Just before Jerusalem was taken by the Romans, the Jews, he says, were the corruptest people under the heavens. They were arriv'd at such an uncommon, and prodigious height of iniquity, that he believes, if the Romans had delay'd their coming against them ; the earth wou'd have open-

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(w) *Nat. Hist. l. 13. cap. 14. Nec quidquam prius imbutur, quam contemnere Deos. Tacit. Hist. l. 5.*

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ed, and swallow'd them up : or a deluge of water swept them all away : or a fire from heaven would have consum'd them, as it did Sodom and Gomor-rha (x). *Juvenal* represents the Roman Jews, as strolling impostors, and fortune-tellers (y) : some of them are accus'd of cheating people of their money, under a pretence of making collections for the sacred treasury at Jerusalem (z). And in a word, their conduct in many instances, was far from being innocent, and justifiable ; and the Gen-tiles, who were prejudic'd against them, made the crimes of particular persons, a national reflection : and they were the more ready to credit every ca-lumny upon the Jews, because they observ'd that their conduct, in many things, deserv'd censure.

*Lastly*, As to the occasion of that particular charge of *Onolatvia*, or Ass-worship, there are va-rious conjectures. The Jews were said to worship the head of an Ass, because *Moses*, by the assistance of some wild Asses, found out water in the wil-derness. Some therefore are of opinion (a), that

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(x) *Joseph. de Bello Jud. l. 6. cap. 26. p. 930. cap. 27. p. 933. cap. 37. p. 940. l. 7. cap. 30. p. 986.*

(y) *ære minuto,*

*Qualiacunq; voles Judæi somnia vendunt.*

*Sat. 6. Vers. 547.*

(z) *Joseph. Antiquit. Jud. l. 18. cap. 5. Vide Sueton. Tiber. cap. 36. Tacit. Annal. l. 2.*

(a) *Vide Ouzel. Not. in Min. Fel. p. 84. Fuller Miscel. l. 3. cap. 8.*

the following passage in Genesis, gave the first occasion for this calumny, upon the Jews. *This was that Anah that found the mules in the wilderness as he fed the Asses of Zibeon his father (b).* Now the word *jamim*, which our translators render *mules*, signifies also seas, or pools of water (c): and according to this interpretation, the verse runs thus. *Ana found waters in the wilderness, as he fed the Asses of Zibeon his father.* This latter interpretation seems to have the preference, because in all other places in the old Testament, mules are call'd, not *Jamim*, but *Peradim* (d). But this conjecture is of little weight or significancy, being built upon a supposition, that the Gentiles mistook *Ana* for *Moses*, which cannot, without the greatest difficulty, be conceiv'd.

Another ingenious conjecture, and which is attended with greater probability, is made by the learned, and worthy author of the reasonableness, and certainty of the Christian religion (e).

“ He observes, that the highest degree of ex-  
“ communication, among the Jews, being styl'd

(b) *Gen.* 36. 24.

(c) Alii putant *Jamim* *Maria* appellata. Iisdem enim litteris scribuntur *Maria*, quibus & nunc hic sermo descriptus est. Et volunt illum dum pascit asinos patris sui in deserto, aquarum congregationes repperisse: quæ juxta idioma linguæ Hebraicæ *Maria* nuncupentur. *Hieron. Quæst. in Genes. Tom. 3. p. 101.*

(d) *1 Kings* 10. 25. *2 Kings* 5. 17, &c.

(e) *Dr. Jenkins Preface to the 2d Vol. p. 15, 16.*



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“ *Shammatha*; which is the same with *Maranatha*:  
 “ *Sham* signifying Lord, as *Maran* also doth in  
 “ the Syriac, and other Languages: and *Atha* sig-  
 “ nifying cometh: *Atha* might either ignorantly,  
 “ or maliciously be mistaken for *Athon*; which sig-  
 “ nifies an Afs. And ’tis likely, that this calum-  
 “ ny might be first rais’d by some body, who had  
 “ been excommunicated, and turn’d Apostate, in  
 “ *Heliopolis*, or some other part of *Ægypt*; for  
 “ *Apion* was the first that vented it: and the Jew-  
 “ ish Temple in *Heliopolis*, being denominated  
 “ from its founder *Onias*, the High Priest, that  
 “ might give some countenance to this pretence,  
 “ as if it had taken its name from ὄνος, an Afs,  
 “ and had been from thence call’d ὀνειον.

This conjecture, especially the latter part of it, which derives the calumny from the similitude of the names *Onias*, or *Oneion*, and *Onos*, which signifies an Afs, is exceeding probable. For, *First*, This calumny did not commence till after the Jewish Temple was built in *Ægypt*, by *Onias*; which was about 150 years before the birth of our Saviour. This *Onias* being disappointed of the high-priesthood, fled into *Ægypt*; where he got so far into the good graces of *Ptolemy Philometor*, that he obtain’d a License from him to build a Temple, and a city, which from its founder was denominated *Onion*, i. e. the city of *Onias* (f). The place

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(f) *Joseph. Antiq. l. 13. cap. 6. l. 20. cap. 8. de bello Jud. l. 7. cap. 37.*

assign’d

assign'd him was in the prefecture of *Heliopolis*, at about two and twenty miles distance from *Memphis* (g). He had also a large Territory given him by king *Ptolemy*, which he planted with Jews, and which was afterwards call'd *Ονεία χώρα*, the country of *Onias* (h). 2. *Apion*, an eminent Grammarian in the reign of *Tiberius* (i) the first spreader of this calumny (as far as it appears) was an *Aegyptian* (k). 3. There were many contests and disputes, between the *Aegyptians*, and the Jews that dwelt in *Aegypt*; which were carried on, in the most opprobrious, abusive language, and terminated frequently in blows (l). The Jews derided the *Aegyptians*, for worshipping of brute beasts: the *Aegyptians* recriminated, and charg'd them with worshipping an *As*, in their opinion, the most impure, and contemptible of animals (m). When they wanted just matter for censure, invention supply'd them with new topicks of slander. Upon a seeming resemblance between *Onion*, or *Onias*,

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(g) *De bello Jud.* l. 7. cap. 37.

(h) *Ibid.* Vide *Antiq.* l. 14. cap. 14.

(i) Vide *Suid.* in *Apion*.

(k) *Ibid.* *Joseph. contra Apion.* l. 2. p. 1063. For *Apion's* character, as an historian, see *Aul. Gell. Noct. Attic.* l. 5. cap. 14.

(l) *Joseph. de Bell. Jud.* l. 2. cap. 36. cont. *Apion.* l. 1. p. 1051. l. 2. p. 1062, 1065.

(m) Vide *Plutarch. de Isid. & Osir.* p. 268. *Alex. ab Alex.* l. 4. cap. 2. 26.

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and *Onos*, an Ass ; 'tis probable, they founded the calumny of *Onolatria* : and the charge that was originally levell'd at the *Ægyptian* Jews, or those that inhabited the Territory of *Onias*, became afterwards a general reflection upon the whole Jewish nation.

But to return. Whatever it was, that occasion'd those spiteful calumnies upon the Jews : we may with reason enough suppose, that the Christians were accus'd of *Onolatria*, purely because the Jews had been charg'd with it before. It is the opinion of *Tertullian* (whose authority I take to be very good in this case, for the reason mention'd above) that the suppos'd affinity, or relation between the Jewish, and the Christian Religion, involv'd the Christians under this infamous censure<sup>(n)</sup>. It may, I confess, seem something strange, and surprising ; that the Infidels, towards the latter end of the second century, when I suppose, this calumny upon the Christians was first form'd, shou'd take the Jewish, and the Christian worship for the same thing. But in answer to this difficulty let it be consider'd, that both Jews and Christians were such contemptible, vile, and infamous wretches, in the eyes of the pagans, that they wou'd not

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(n) ——— Inde opinor præsumptum, nos quoq; ut Judaicæ religionis propinquos, eidem simulachro initiari. *Apol. cap. 16.*

condescend



condescend to give themselves the trouble of an enquiry about them. For this reason they continu'd in ignorance a long time; and basely, and impudently condemn'd, what they knew but very little of. *Lucian*, who wrote in *Adrian's* time, or as some will have it (o), in the reign of *M. Antoninus*, A. D. 176, seems to confound Jews and Christians. He says of *Peregrinus*, τὴν θανμαστὴν σοφίαν τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἐξέμαθε, πρὸς τὴν παλαιστίνην τοῖς ἱερεῦσι καὶ γραμματεῦσιν ἀντὶ τῶν συγγενόμενος (p). He learnt the wonderful wisdom of the Christians, by conversing with their Priests, and Scribes in Palestine.

But admitting that the infidels knew exactly the difference between Judaism, and Christianity, which I dare be positive was false in fact; most of those cruel, and severe aspersions thrown upon the Christians, were known to be false, and groundless even by their bitterest enemies. They were as much a contradiction to the real, and sober sentiments of a pagan, as they were distant from truth, and from justice. The Jews had been accus'd of worshipping the head of an Ass: this the heathens must be very sensible, cou'd be no justifiable reason, for laying the same accusation

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(o) Vide *Cav. Hist. Lit. Vol. 1. p. 62. Fabric. Biblioth. Græc. l. 4. cap. 16.*

(p) *De morte Peregrin. Vol. 2. p. 593. καὶ περὶ τῆς καὶ διασέως, καὶ ξυνεργίας. Ibid.*

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against the Christians : but this silly tale had render'd the Jews, as was found by experience, odious, and contemptible ; and therefore the pagans loaded the Christians with the same charge, hoping that it would equally expose the Christian name.

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## CHAP.



## C H A P. VII.

*The charge of Sedition, and being enemies to Cæsar accounted for.*

**T**HIS charge was the most artfully laid, and the most vigorously prosecuted of any, being the chief Engine, by which the heathens executed their inhuman cruelties. While they cou'd engage *Cæsar* in the quarrel against the Christians, they were secure of being assisted by the military power; and cou'd strip a poor innocent Christian of his substance, or murder him at pleasure. A heathen Emperour cou'd hear the Christians accus'd of many things with patience, and indifferency; but when they were tax'd with disloyalty, and disaffection towards *Cæsar*, this awaken'd his rage, and arm'd him with resentment. There happen'd a quarrel between the Jews, and the Greeks that dwelt at *Alexandria*: and both sides appeal'd to the Emperour *Caligula*. *Philo* was at the head of the Embassy for the Jews, and learnedly, and elegantly pleaded their cause. But when *Apion* on the other side objected, that the Jews refus'd to pay divine honours to the Emperour, and to swear by his



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name (a), *Caligula* in a rage drove *Philo* from his presence : gave peremptory orders to have his own Statue set up in the holy Temple at Jerusalem ; meditated revenge upon the Jews, which wou'd have been executed in a terrible manner, but that it pleas'd Almighty God to take this savage monster out of the world (b). *Pontius Pilate*, though a man of an infamous character (c) ; and ready enough to perpetrate any villainy, was unwilling to condemn the Lord Jesus Christ, that most perfect pattern of innocence and goodness, till the Jews represented him as an Enemy to *Cæsar* (d). And under the same representation, his disciples and followers met with unheard of cruelties, and exquisite Torments. Whenever the calumny was reviv'd, the persecution was renew'd, and thousands of Christians were sacrific'd to the mad rage of a barbarous Tyrant.

To support the charge of disaffection towards *Cæsar*, the heathens had recourse to several popular arguments ; and put the vilest construction even upon the most innocent, and inoffensive conduct of the Christians. Their sacred assemblies being held in the night, gave their enemies a specious handle

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(a) Vide *Philon. Legat. ad Caium. Joseph. Antiquit. l. 18. cap. 10. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 2. cap. 5.*

(b) *Joseph. Antiq. l. 18. cap. 11.*

(c) *Philo legat. ad Caium. Euseb. H. Eccles. l. 2. cap. 7.*

(d) *John 19. 12.*

to represent them as nurseries of faction, and sedition, and a confederacy against the publick peace. By the laws of the twelve tables, it was forbidden to hold any nocturnal meeting within the city (e); and there are several imperial edicts to the same purpose. We learn from *Pliny* (f), that *Trajan* prohibited the *Hetariæ*, that is all private societies or assemblies. *Cyprian* was told at his martyrdom, that the Emperours had commanded that there shou'd be no *Conciliabula*, or meetings in any place; and that none shou'd frequent the *Cœmeteries*, or burying places of the martyrs (g). It was objected against the Christians in *Ægypt*, in the reign of *Valerian*, that they held unlawful assemblies (h): and afterwards we find the Emperour *Maximin* forbidding the Christians to assemble at the *Cœmeteries* (i).

But tho' there were so many imperial decrees of this nature, the observation of which was enforc'd with menaces, and the utmost severities; yet the Christians were not to be terrify'd into a neglect of their duty, and cou'd not be prevail'd upon, to forsake the assembling of themselves together. Upon

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(e) Vide *Stemech. Not. in Arnob. p. 110.*

(f) *Epist. 97. l. 10.*

(g) *Vita Sti. Cypriani. Edit. Oxon. p. 12.*

(h) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 7. cap. 11. p. 257, 258.*

(i) *Euseb. H. E. l. 9. cap. 2.*

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this the heathens grew very loud, and outrageous in their clamours : they call'd the Christians a lawless faction, an impious conspiracy (*k*), a publick pest, declar'd enemies to *Cæsar*, and the Roman laws (*l*). It was the first calumny that *Celsus* threw upon the Christians, that they kept their private feasts of charity, in contempt of the laws (*m*). Their conventicles were frequently pull'd down (*n*), and sometimes burnt, together with all the people there assembled (*o*) : and in a word, no punishment was thought too severe, for such capital offenders, and such execrable Treason.

*Pliny*, after a strict enquiry, owns the Christian assemblies to be harmless, and innocent (*p*) : and what was done there is related by the Apologists, without any disguise. They tell the heathens, that they were so far from being enemies to *Cæsar*, or the publick peace, that they pray'd for all mankind

(*k*) *Min. Fel. p. 70, 81.*

(*l*) *Vita Sti. Cypriani p. 13. Tertul. Apol. cap. 2.*

(*m*) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 1. p. 4.*

(*n*) *Arnob. advers. Gentes, l. 4. p. 152.*

(*o*) *Lactant. de Justitia, l. 5. cap. 11. p. 258.*

(*p*) Affirmabant autem hanc fuisse summam vel culpæ suæ, vel erroris, quod essent soliti stato die ante lucem convenire, Carmenq; Christo, quasi Deo, dicere secum invicem : seq; sacramento non in scelus aliquod obstringere ; sed ne furtâ, ne latrocinia, ne adulteria committerent ; ne fidem fallerent, ne depositum appellati abnegarent. Quibus peractis, morem sibi discedendi fuisse : rursusq; coeundi ad capiendum cibum, promiscuum tamen, & innoxium. *Epist. 97. l. 10.*



in general; and more particularly for the happiness, and prosperity of the emperours (q). But all this avail'd nothing, and cou'd neither clear the Christians from the imputation of disloyalty, nor screen them from persecution. To dispute any of *Cæsar's* commands, let them be what they wou'd, was an unpardonable contempt of his authority, and a Treason that merited his hottest indignation.

The Christians kept their assemblies privately in the night, because they were afraid of being insulted by their enemies, and interrupted at their devotions. Besides many of the poorer sort had no leisure in the day time, to attend upon religious exercises, being oblig'd to follow some servile, and laborious occupation, for the maintenance of themselves, or families. But the heathens assign'd a quite different reason for those nocturnal assemblies; and drew an argument of guilt, from the privacy of the Christian worship. This is one of the strongest arguments brought by *Cæcilins* to support the charge against the Christians (r). Why so much caution, and secrecy, if they do nothing they are asham'd of? if men *love darkness rather than light, it is because their deeds are evil.*

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(q) *Tertul. Apol. cap. 30, 31. Cyprian. ad Demetrian. Athanas. Legat. Arnob. l. 4.*

(r) *Min. Fel. p. 85, 90.*

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2. They were tax'd with disloyalty, because they refus'd to pay divine honours to *Cæsar*, and to give him such lofty titles, as belong only to the supreme Being. Such was the degeneracy and infatuation of the heathens, that they treated the Emperours as Gods, and even some of the worst of them, who were strangers to every commendable quality, and seem'd to be sunk below the dignity of rational creatures. Most of them had divine worship paid them, either when living, or dead : and those who refus'd it, were sure to have their modesty rewarded with an *Apotheosis* afterwards (s). Not long after our Lord's Ascension, the worship of *Cæsar* was esteem'd a necessary, and essential part of religion. This engag'd the utmost attention of a heathen, and commanded his profoundest respect, and veneration. The rest of their fabulous deities grew in some measure neglected ; and the old superstitious rites gave way to more fashionable fooleries. They were more afraid of *Cæsar*, than of *Jupiter* himself ; and accounted it a greater crime, to swear falsely by the genius of *Cæsar*, than by all their gods besides (t).

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(s) *Dicavit Cælo Tiberius Augustum, sed ut Majestatis numen induceret : Claudium Nero, sed ut irideret : Vespasianum Titus, Domitianus Titum : sed ille, ut Dei filius, hic, ut frater videretur : Tu sideribus patrem intulisti. Plin. Panegy.*

(t) *Tertul. Apol. cap. 28. Min, Fel. p. 283.*

The Emperour *Augustus*, no doubt of it, had observ'd, how odious, and unpopular *Julius Caesar* had made himself, by suffering divine honours to be paid him (u): and this perhaps might occasion that edict of his, whereby he forbad any one to call him *Dominum*, Lord; a title at that time appropriated to their Gods (w). *Tiberius*, a master in dissimulation, and well studied in the arts of popularity, wou'd not admit of this title (x): nay he gave orders, that none shou'd swear by his name; or build him any temples, or altars (y), which *Augustus* cou'd connive at (z), notwithstanding his pretended modesty, and humility. But afterwards the Roman emperours elated by flattery, and intoxicated with power, without any scruple, receiv'd divine honours of all kinds. *Caligula* was call'd *Dominus & Deus* (a), and *Domitian* gave orders (b), that no one shou'd presume to mention him, but under those titles.

(u) Sueton. *Ful.* cap. 76. *Dion. Cass.* l. 44.

(w) Sueton. *Aug.* cap. 53. Vide *Oros.* adv. *Pagan.* l. 5. c. 21.

(x) Sueton. *Tib.* cap. 27. *Tacit. Annal.* l. 2.

(y) *Ibid.* cap. 26.

(z) *Aurel. Vict. in Augusto.* Sueton. *Aug.* cap. 52.

Jurandaſq; tuum per nomen ponimus Aras.

*Horat. Epist.* L. 2. *Epist.* 1.

(a) *Aurel. Vict. in Caio.* Vide *Senec. de Tranquil. Anim.* cap. 14.

(b) Sueton. *Domit.* cap. 13. Vide *Martial.* L. 5. *Ep.* 8. l. 8. *Epigr.* 2.



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The primitive Christians refus'd to call *Cæsar* Lord, which gave great offence, and render'd their Loyalty suspected. They knew no difference (c) between κύριος Lord, and θεός God; and believ'd, that the former in its original acceptation denoted (d) universal sovereignty, and absolute dominion, which cou'd belong to none but Almighty God himself. *Dominus*, in *Tertullian's* opinion, is the surname of God. He shou'd not scruple, he says, to call *Cæsar* Lord (e); but he wou'd do it in a common sense, and without intrenching upon the Prerogative of God. If *Polycarp* cou'd have been prevail'd upon, to call *Cæsar* Lord: to sacrifice (f), and reproach Jesus Christ, he might have escap'd with impunity. But the good old man with a decent warmth, and invincible courage, rejected the blasphemous proposal, and cry'd out, *Eighty and six years have I serv'd the Lord Jesus, and he has never done me any wrong: how then can I blaspheme my King, and my Saviour* (g)?

For several ages afterwards, the Christians had a scruple upon their minds, whether it was law-

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(c) Καὶν τε Κύριον ἀκέσωμεν, καὶν τε Θεόν, ἐδεμίαι ἐν τοῖς ὀνόμασιν ὅτι διαφορὰ. *Chrysost. Homil. 14. in Gen.*

(d) Κύριος δὲ ὅτι, διὰ τὸ κυριεύειν αὐτὸν ἡμεῖς ὅλων. *Theoph. ad Autol. l. 1.*

(e) *Apol. cap. 34.*

(f) Τί γὰρ κακὸν ὅτιν εἰπεῖν, Κύριε Καῖσαρ, καὶ ἐπιθῆναι, καὶ διασωζέσθαι; *Epist. Eccles. Smyrn. de Polycarp. Mart. cap. 8.*

(g) *Ibid. cap. 9.*

ful to give any man the title of *Lord*. For this reason the Greeks call'd their Emperours, and great men, not *Kύριοι*, but *Κύριοι* : and the Latins *Dompni*, or *Domni*, instead of *Domini*. And hence 'tis thought came the titles of *Dom*, and *Don*, amongst the *Italians*, and *Spaniards* : and *Sire*, and *Sir*, or *Cyr* (which are suppos'd to be corrupt abbreviations of *Curios* Lord) among the French, and English (*h*). The Jews were as nice, and scrupulous in this matter as the Christians ; and accounted it an abominable crime to call the greatest man living by the title of Lord. We are inform'd by *Josephus* (*i*), that a great number of Jews were most cruelly tormented, onely because they refus'd to call *Cæsar* Lord ; and maintain'd to the last, with wonderful courage, and resolution, *Θεὸν μόνον δεσπότην*, that *God alone was their Lord or master*.

3. To swear by the genius, the fortune, or the safety of the Emperour, was reckon'd a most sacred oath, and a test of loyalty, and affection to *Cæsar*. An oath by *Julius*, was a decision of all controversies (*k*). It was an usual thing to swear by *Augustus* (*l*), even whilst he was living : and there was a design to build a Temple to his *Genius* (*m*) at the publick charge. There was not any

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(*h*) *Spelman. Glossar. in voc. Dompnus.*

(*i*) *De Bello Jud. l. 7. cap. 37.*

(*k*) *Sueton. Jul. cap. 85. Vide Dion. Cass. l. 44.*

(*l*) *Horat. Epist. l. 2. Ep. 1.*

(*m*) *Sueton. Aug. cap. 60.*

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oath more common, or more sacred with the Emperour *Claudius*, than that by the *Genius* of *Augustus* (n): and it was esteem'd a crime of a high nature, to prophane the name of *Augustus* by perjury (o). *Caligula* put some to death, only because they had never sworn by his *Genius* (p). After the death of his sister *Drusilla*, of whom he was passionately fond, he made her a goddess, and swore by her name (q). Nay he had a favourite horse, that he invited to a splendid supper; design'd to make him *Consul*, and swore by the safety, and the fortune of his horse (r).

This impious custom, of swearing by the *Genius* of *Cæsar*, prevail'd a long time, as we learn from *Tertullian*, and *Origen*: and was not, 'tis probable, entirely laid aside, till the Emperours themselves embrac'd the Christian religion. The Christians under almost every persecution were call'd upon (s), to swear by *Cæsar*: to sacrifice, and call him Lord: and their refusal pass'd for a certain sign of disloyalty, and entail'd upon them all those tortures and miseries, that bigotry, and madness cou'd invent. Some of the Fathers mention the reasons, why the

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(n) *Sueton. Claud. cap. 11.*

(o) *Tacit. Annal. l. 1.*

(p) *Sueton. Calig. cap. 27.*

(q) *Ibid. cap. 24. Vide Dion. Cass. l. 59.*

(r) *Dion. Cass. l. 59. Sueton. Calig. cap. 55. Alex. ab Alex. l. 5. vol. 2. p. 95.*

(s) *Vide Polycarp. Mart. Plin. Epist. l. 10. Epist. 97.*



primitive Christians refus'd to swear by the fortune, or *Genius* of *Cæsar*. By fortune they understood nothing, but the uncertain vicissitudes of human affairs : so that to swear by *Cæsar's Fortune*, was in effect to swear by nothing, which must be an oath of a vain, trifling, and sinful nature. They cou'd not swear by *Cæsar's Genius*, because, if a *Genius* was any thing in reality, it was an evil spirit, or *Dæmon*; and they were ready to die ten thousand deaths, rather than give the honour due to Almighty God, to the powers of darkness, which they had so solemnly renounc'd at their Baptism (t). To swear by the Safety of *Cæsar*, *Tertullian* speaks of (u), as a justifiable practice, amongst the Christians of his time : but he goes no further, and takes a *Genius*, and a devil to be the same thing.

4. They were said to be enemies to *Cæsar*, because they wou'd not sacrifice (w), nor pay any adoration to his Image. The heathens thought they cou'd not do honour enough to *Cæsar*, by sacrificing for his safety ; but they grew mad with

(t) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 8. p. 421. Tertul. Apol. cap. 31. Min. Fel. p. 283.*

(u) *Sed & juramus, sicut non per Genios Cæsarum, ita per salutem eorum, quæ est augustior omnibus Geniis. Ibid.*

(w) *Deos, inquit, non colitis, & pro Imperatoribus sacrificia non impenditis, — itaq; sacrilegii, & majestatis rei convenimur. Tertul. Apol. cap. 10.*

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loyalty, offer'd up sacrifices to *Cæsar* himself, as God ; and treated his sacred statue, with the same superstitious ceremony, and religious reverence, as they did the statues, of the rest of their fabulous Deities. The purple robe, the crown and the diadem, universal empire, and unlimited power and authority, was not enough for *Cæsar* (x): he must also be worshipp'd as a God ; and the lowest adoration paid to his statue. *Caligula*, we are told (y), gave orders for removing the famous statue of the *Olympian Jupiter*, made by that celebrated artist *Phidias*, from Greece to Rome : designing to strike off the head, and to have his own set on. He was saluted by the name of *Jupiter Latialis*. *The Italian Jupiter*. He had his temple, and his priests, and the most costly sacrifices were offer'd up, to that abandon'd wretch every day (z). Divine honours were also paid to the statues of *Nero* (a), *Heliogabalus* (b), and others (c). Nay some of the wisest, and best of the Roman empe-

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(x) *Gregor. Naz. Orat. 3. contra Julian. p. 83.*

(y) *Sueton. Calig. cap. 22.*

(z) *Ibid. Nec jam procul erat tumulus, in quo Cæsari, Deo nostro, fiebat quotidianum sacrum. Sen. de Tranquillit. Animi, cap. 14.*

(a) *Medio Tribunal Sedem Curulem, & sedes effigiem Neronis sustinebat. Ad quam progressus Tiridates, cæsis ex more victimis, sublatum capiti Diadema Imagini subjecit. Tacit. Annal. l. 15.*

(b) *Herodian. l. 5. cap. 12. 13.*

(c) *Vide Dion. Cass. l. 58. Sueton. Tiber. cap. 65.*

rours, without any scruple admitted of them : as *Trajan*, for instance, whose vertues have been so mightily extoll'd in a fulsome panegyrick (d). *Thura adolere, & vinum libare*, to burn incense, and make a libation of wine to *Cæsar's* picture, or statue, was a custom, that probably prevail'd, even as long as the emperours were heathens.

5. The Christians were charg'd with disloyalty, because they did not keep *Cæsar's* birth-day (e) ; and other annual festivals, that were observ'd by the heathens, with great solemnity. With what frantick mirth, what irregularity and debauchery, those holy days were celebrated, we learn from *Tertullian*. The houses were illuminated. The doors dress'd up with laurel. The wine ran in the streets. Tables were spread in every place ; and the whole city look'd like one common Tavern. Luxury, impudence, and lewdness was visible in every quarter. Their mirth degenerated into madness, and their feasting terminated in most brutal excesses. To get drunk on *Cæsar's* birth-day was meritorious. Sobriety pass'd for a mark of disloyalty, and to be loud in their wishes for *Cæsar's* health, and prosperity, aton'd for much wicked-

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(d) *Imagini tuæ — Thure & Vino supplicarent. — omnes & Imaginem tuam, deorumq; simulacra venerati sunt. Plin. Trajano. Epist. 97. l. 10. Vide Fragment. Orat. Julian. p. 537, 539.*

(e) *Tertul. Apol. cap. 35.*



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ness, and many disorders. The Christians cou'd not bear a part in those publick rejoycings: such luxury, and licentiousness was no ways suitable to their discreet, and regular behaviour: nay even the green boughs, and illuminations they cou'd not approve of; because they resembled the stews(f): and we find an excommunication, denounc'd by one of the Apostolical Canons, against those who lighted candles at a heathen festival (g).

6. The Christians talk'd much of the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of Christ; and comforted one another with the hopes and expectations of it: and this created a jealousy amongst their enemies, as if they were setting up a power, in opposition to *Cæsar's* authority. When ye hear us talk of a kingdom, says *Justin (h)*, ye rashly conclude, that we mean a kingdom upon earth: when ye might be convinc'd even to a demonstration, that we place all our hopes, and all our comforts in the kingdom of Heaven: for when we are examin'd, whether we are Christians, we frankly own that we are; tho' we know that death, is the unavoidable consequence of such a confession: whereas if it was an earthly kingdom that we aim'd at; we shou'd certainly endeavour to preserve our lives,

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(f) *Ibid.* Vide l. 2. *ad Uxorem.* cap. 6.

(g) *Can.* 63.

(h) *Apol.* 1.

by all possible ways, that we might enjoy the protection, the privileges, and advantages of that temporal kingdom. The Jews very early charg'd the Christians with disaffection to *Cæsar*, because they had another King, the Lord Jesus.

When *Paul* and *Silas* preach'd to the Jews at *Thessalonica*, those that believ'd not drew *Jason*, and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city; crying, these that have turn'd the world upside down, are come hither also: whom *Jason* hath receiv'd, and these all do contrary to the decrees of *Cæsar*, saying, that there is another King, one *Jesus* (i).

7. As the Christians were generally suppos'd to be the offspring of the Jews, and so nearly related to them, that they were frequently confounded together, and undistinguish'd: so it is not unlikely, that the Jews did, in some measure at least, occasion this calumny upon the Christians, being notorious for their disaffection, and opposition to *Cæsar*, and the Roman governours. They were represented as a seditious, and stubborn people, and naturally prone to rebellion (k). *Titus*, at the siege of Jerusalem, tells 'em, that ever since *Pompey's* time, they had been making disturbances,

(i) *Acts* 17. 6, 7.

(k) Στασιώδεις διαβαλλόμενοι. — κατηγόρει τὸ ἔθνος τότε δούρεκτον καὶ δυσπειθὲς φύσει πρὸς τὸν βασιλέα. *Joseph. de Bello Jud.* l. 2. cap. 8.

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and waging war with the Romans (*l*). They were perpetually struggling to recover their liberties, and to free themselves from the servitude of the Roman yoke. This they look'd upon as an indispensable duty, and they thought no punishment great enough for those, who tamely submitted to the Roman tyranny (*m*). They own'd no sovereign but God (*n*); and wou'd not submit to any governours, but such as were of their own nation, and set over them by the express appointment of Almighty God.

Some of the Jewish converts seem to have been tainted with these notions; and cou'd not forbear expecting a temporal Kingdom of the Messiah; and for this reason perhaps it has been observ'd by *Justin* (*o*), that the Gentile converts were better Christians, than those who came from the Jews, and Samaritans: and for the same reason we find the Apostles giving repeated directions to the Jewish converts. To be *subject to the higher powers. To pay tribute, to whom tribute is due. To submit themselves to every ordinance of man: whether it be unto the King, or unto governours, that are sent by him. Not to use their liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, &c* (*p*).

(*l*) *Joseph. de Bello Jud. l. 7. cap. 34.*

(*m*) *Ibid. l. 2. cap. 23. Vide l. 2. c. 28. l. 3. c. 25; l. 4. c. 13. Vide Deuteron. 17. 15.*

(*n*) *Μήτε Ρωμαίοις, μήτ' ἄλλω πρὶ δεσπύειν, ἢ θεῷ. Ibid. l. ult. cap. 34.*

(*o*) *Apol. 1.*

(*p*) *Rom. 13. 1, 7. 1-Pet. 2. 13, 14, 16.*

Having



Having discover'd the foundations of this calumny, it wou'd be needless and impertinent to expose the baseness, and absurdity of it: but it may not be amiss to examine a little further, how the primitive Christians behav'd towards *Cæsar*, and what they said in their own vindication, to obviate the calumny, and to wipe off the imputation of disloyalty: and with a very little inquiry it will soon appear, that they paid *Cæsar* all that respect, that was fit for them to give, and for *Cæsar* to receive; and did every thing that cou'd reasonably be expected by the best of princes, from the best of men.

1. At their daily devotions they never omitted praying for *Cæsar*'s health, and prosperity (*q*): and they were the more fervent, and importunate in these petitions; because they thought that a great deal depended upon *Cæsar*'s success, and the security of the Roman government. Whilst the Roman empire stood firm, and was in a flourishing condition, all was safe: but the dissolution of that Empire, whenever it shou'd happen, fatally presag'd, as they imagin'd, the coming of Antichrist,

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(*q*) *Precantes sumus semper pro omnibus Imperatoribus, vitam illis prolixam, Imperium securum, domum tutam, exercitus fortes, senatum fidelem, populum probum, orbem quietum, quæcunq; hominis & Cæsaris vota sunt. Tertul. Apol. cap. 30. Vide cap. 31. ad Scap. cap. 2. Cyprian. ad Demetrian. Arnob. l. 4. &c.*

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and the dissolution of the world (r). This notion of theirs was deriv'd from a passage in St. Paul's second Epistle to the Thessalonians. c. 2. v. 7, 8. *He who now letteth, will let, untill he be taken out of the way. And then shall that wicked one be reveal'd, &c.* Most of the Fathers, and antient commentators upon this place (s), understand by ὁ κατέχων, *he that withholdeth, or letteth, the Roman state (t).* Whether they were right, or wrong in the application of this passage, is not material at present: so long as they were of opinion, that the *revelation of the wicked one, the man of sin*, was retarded by the Roman Empire; they must think it to be their duty, as well as their interest, to be hearty, and sincere in their prayers, and their wishes for the continuance of that Empire, and the success and prosperity of all its governours.

2. They paid tribute to *Cæsar* more punctually, and readily, than any of his heathen subjects (u): and this they did in conformity to the Example of their great Lord, and master, and the directions given by his holy Apostles.

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(r) *Tertul. ad Scap. cap. 2. Apol. cap. 32. Lactant. l. 7. cap. 25.*

(s) *Hieron. ad Algas. Quest. 11. Tom. 4. p. 78. Ambros. Chrysos. Oecumen. Theophylact. in loc.*

(t) *Tertul. de Resurrectione Carnis. cap. 24.*

(u) *Justin, Mart. Apol. 1. Tatian. Affyr. contra Græcos. p. 144.*

3. Many of them follow'd *Cæsar* to the Wars, and did eminent services in the field of Battle. There were some amongst them, I confess, that absolutely refus'd to fight under *Cæsar's* banner : but this proceeded not from any disrespect to his person, or contempt of his authority ; but from an opinion, that a military way of life was unlawful, and inconsistent with the duties of a Christian (w). Besides let it be observ'd, that this was the opinion but of a few, and not the general sense of the primitive Church. *Tertullian*, who seems not to approve of a Christian's being a soldier, tells the Romans, that their camps, and their castles were fill'd with Christians (x). Several of the Martyrs in the first ages of the Church, were soldiers (y). There were many Christians that follow'd *M. Antoninus*, in an expedition into *Germany*, who by their prayers obtain'd a signal deliverance, when the whole army was in great distress, and ready to perish for want of water (z). The *Theban* Legion, under the Emperour *Maximian*, consisted of several thousand men, all of them Christians (a).

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(w) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 8. p. 426, 427. l. 5. p. 253. Tertul. de Idololat. cap. 19. de Corona Mil. cap. 11. Lactan. l. 6. cap. 20.*

(x) *Tertul. Apol. cap. 37, 42. de Corona Mil. cap. 1.*

(y) *Vide Grot. de jure Belli & Pacis. l. 1. cap. 2.*

(z) *Vide Epist. M. Aurel. Antonini. apud Justin. Mart. Tertul. Apol. cap. 5. ad Scap. cap. 4. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 5. cap. 5.*

(a) *Vide Grot. de jure Belli & Pacis. l. 1. cap. 4.*



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4. They treated the person of *Cæsar* with all becoming reverence, and respect, and mention'd him with honour. They consider'd him as one that was set over them by Almighty God (*b*), either by way of judgment (*c*), or mercy : either for the orderly, and peaceable government of the world, or for the chastisement of a wicked, and impenitent people. Upon this divine appointment, they founded their Allegiance, and not on the humanity, the justice, or clemency of *Cæsar*.

*Lastly*, They never resisted the higher powers, though they were barbarously oppress'd, and persecuted by them ; and had frequent opportunities of revenging themselves upon their enemies. Tho' they labour'd under an infinite variety of such shocking cruelties, as can scarce be mention'd without horror ; and severely smarted under the Tyranny of many a wicked ruler ; yet they never made the least opposition. Never attempted to depose a tyrant, nor ever imbarqu'd in any design against the life of *Cæsar*. Those renown'd champions for the Christian cause, with inimitable patience, and an entire submission, underwent all those oppressions, which at other times, have made wise men

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(*b*) *Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum Imperatoris : quem sciens a Deo suo constitui, necesse est ut & ipsum diligat, & revereatur, & honoret, & salvum velit, cum toto Romano Imperio, quousq; sæculum stabit. Tertull.*  
*ad Scap. cap. 2.*

(*c*) *Tertul. Apol. cap. 32.*

mad, and have given human nature an ascendant over the Christian.

There have been some, who have attempted to rob the primitive Christians of that honour, and reputation, they had justly acquir'd, on this account ; by imputing their submission, and nonresistance to human prudence, or policy ; to caution, or cowardise ; to want of numbers, or want of experience in military affairs. But I wou'd fain know, what evidence or authority they have for this. The primitive Christians always declar'd, that they submitted for the Lord's sake ; and because *the powers that be, are ordain'd of God*. To say therefore that their obedience was under the regulation of worldly, and prudential motives, is making them guilty of an egregious piece of dissimulation, before God and man ; and charging them with insincerity, artifice, and dissingenuity : which does not agree with the character of a primitive Christian. Besides, their enemies, the heathens, who were always very quick-sighted in discovering, and always very ready to expose, and publish the frailties of a Christian, never imputed their patient submission, under tyrannical oppressions, to prudence, and policy, but to obstinacy, and desperation, madness, or folly. So that this injurious reflection is destitute of all manner of evidence, and has not the least foundation.

It is very probable, that the number of Christians under the first persecutions, was not considerable

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erable enough, to engage with the military powers of heathen Rome : but to infer from hence, that their submission proceeded from their want of power, and was under the influence of their fears, is very unfair : since the behaviour of the Christians under the last persecutions, when they were vastly superior to their enemies, was the very same, as it was in the first persecutions, under *Nero*, and *Domitian*. So early as *Trajan's* reign, when the third persecution rag'd, we find the Christians represented as very numerous by a judicious heathen (*d*). And shall we take *Tertullian's* account of their numbers to be Romantick, and incredible, who wrote his Apology about an hundred years afterwards? He tells the Roman governours, that their cities, and their towns, their forts, and their camps, were fill'd with Christians (*e*) : that if they shou'd retire out of the provinces of the Roman empire, without striking one blow, they shou'd occasion a general ruin, and desolation (*f*). Now with what face cou'd *Tertullian* say this, if it was false ; and when it must be known to be so, by

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(*d*) *Visa est enim mihi res digna consultatione, maxime propter periclitantium numerum. Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis ordinis, utriusq; sexus etiam vocantur in periculum, & vocabuntur. Neq; enim Civitates tantum, sed Vicos etiam atq; agros superstitionis istius contagio pervagata est. Plin. Epist. 97. l. 10.*

(*e*) *Apol. cap. 37. Tanta hominum multitudo, pars pene major civitatis cujusq; ad Scap. cap. 2.*

(*f*) *Apol. cap. 37.*

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those very people to whom he directed his Apology ? To suppose this is to call in question the understanding, as well as the veracity, of that great, and learned man (g).

After *Tertullian's* time the Christians still multiply'd apace : and under the tenth persecution, the imperial armies, and most of the principal towns in all the provinces of the Roman empire, were crowded with Christians : and what dutiful submission they paid to cruel, and tyrannical governours, the famous *Thebean* Legion affords us a remarkable, and glorious instance. That Legion consisted of near seven thousand Christians, who were commanded by *Maximian* to offer up sacrifices to the heathen Gods : and upon their refusal, were many of them cruelly slain. But not one of those gallant men, made the least resistance, nor ever attempted to obstruct the execution of *Cesar's* commands (h). In *Julian's* army the major part was Christian ; but all that Apostate cou'd do against the Christians, cou'd not make them swerve from their Allegiance (i).

(g) *Tertullian's* account of the great number of Christians, agrees with what *St. Cyprian* says. ——— *Nemo nostrum quando apprehenditur, reluctatur : nec se adversus injustam violentiam vestram, quamvis nimius & copiosus noster sit populus, ulciscitur.* ad *Demetrian.* p. 192.

(h) Vide *Grat. de jure Belli & Pacis.* l. 1. cap. 4.

(i) Vide *Greg. Naz. Orat. 1. contra Julian.*

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Admitting the Christians were not able to meet *Cæsar's* victorious Legions in the field : had they no opportunity of gratifying their revenge, in a private way ? Cou'd they never take off a tyrant, and an oppressor, by poyson, or a dagger ? Were there no divisions in the Roman empire ? No competitions for the imperial Diadem ? None of the *Cæsars* odious, and unpopular ? No malecontents under the worst administration ? Yes, a great many : yet those excellent Christians, to their immortal honour, never combin'd with a potent faction ; never list'd with conspirators, nor had any hand in an assassination.

But further. Why shou'd the Christians be afraid to encounter the Roman armies, if they were once persuaded, that resisting of a lawless tyrant, and a persecutor of the Faith, was a laudable action, and agreeable to the will of the Almighty ? Upon this principle, what glorious conquests must they have made, even under an inequality of numbers ? What cou'd have stood against men, animated with a truly religious zeal, fearless of dangers, prodigal of life, and ready to meet death in the most frightful, and deformed shapes, with amazing intrepidity ? How shou'd they turn themselves back in the day of battle, who were engag'd in the cause of God, and by dying in it, merited a crown of Martyrdom (k) ?

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(k) Cui bello non idonei, non prompti fuissetmus, etiam impares copiis, qui tam libenter trucidamur ? *Tertul. Apol. cap. 37.*

The truth of it is : had the primitive Christians thought themselves absolv'd from their Allegiance, and had resisted *Cæsar*, whenever he oppos'd, and persecuted them ; they wou'd have acted contrary to the interest of the Christian religion, and effectually hindred its propagation. For, what an outcry wou'd this have rais'd ? This wou'd have arm'd all the princes and potentates of the earth against them. The Church cou'd never have got kings to be her nursing Fathers, nor queens her nursing mothers. Christianity cou'd never have got footing, or never made any considerable progress. The new Kingdom of the Son of God might have been crush'd to pieces in its infancy, and all succeeding ages of the world depriv'd of the benefits purchas'd by our holy Redeemer. But to conclude. To say that the primitive Christians submitted to wicked, and tyrannical princes merely out of fear, or upon secular, and prudential views ; is a notion false, and absurd, and has been advanc'd by some men, upon no other foundation than this, a desire of making the principles, and the practices of a primitive Christian, Tally with their own.





## C H A P. VIII.

### *The charge of Ignorance and Poverty accounted for.*

**T**Here was scarce any one Accusation laid against the the primitive Christians, that so little affected them as this. They cou'd without much concern, hear themselves represented, as a half starv'd, and illiterate rabble; as the offscouring of the world, and the dreggs of the people; whilst they were rich in good works, and wise unto Salvation. *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus*, was the genuine character of a primitive Christian. To live well, and as became the true Disciples, and followers of the Lord Jesus, was the utmost of their wishes, as well as endeavours. This engross'd their time, and their thoughts, and commanded their attention. They were so intent upon their duty to their great Creator, and so ravish'd with the expectation of that Glory, which shall one day be reveal'd; that they contemn'd all temporal pleasures, and sometimes forgot the ordinary conveniencies of life.

*First*, They were charg'd with the grossest ignorance and stupidity, because the infidels suppos'd  
that

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that no one cou'd desert their old establish'd superstitions, without first giving up his reason, and disclaiming all manner of pretensions to common understanding. To refuse to worship the pagan deities, and, what was still worse, flatly to deny their existence, betray'd (as they thought) a total absence, and dereliction of all the rational Powers, and had in it an equal mixture of nonsense, and impiety. Their religion was the religion of their Ancestors; and for that reason no consideration cou'd prevail with them to part with it (a). It had continued for a great many hundreds of years (b). Had been embrac'd by an infinite number of People, and by many that had been renown'd for learning, and probity. On the other hand, the Christians were look'd upon as a novel sect, that sprung up but yesterday (c), and was *every where spoken against* (d): and whoever cou'd

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(a) Non me ex ea opinione, quam a majoribus accepi de cultu Deorum immortalium, ullius unquam Oratio, aut docti, aut indocti, movebit. *Cotta apud Tull. de Nat. Deor. l. 2.*

(b) Hæ sunt religiones, quas sibi a majoribus suis traditas, pertinacissime tueri, ac defendere perseverant: nec considerant quales sint, sed ex hoc probatas, atq; veras esse confidunt, quod eas veteres tradiderunt: tantaq; est auctoritas vetustatis, ut inquirere in eam, scelus esse ducatur: itaq; creditur ei passim, tanquam cognitæ veritati. *Lactan. l. 2. cap. 6.*

(c) Sed novellum nomen est nostrum, & ante dies paucos religio est nata, quam sequimur. *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l. 2. p. 92. Vide p. 94. Theoph. ad Autol. l. 3.*

(d) *Act. 28. 22.*

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prefer

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prefer these modern opinions, to those old, and venerable pagan rites, and ceremonies, was thought to be seiz'd with a desperate phrenzy, or at least, to have had an uncommon weakness, and defect in his understanding.

*Secondly.* They were tax'd with ignorance, because there were somethings in the Christian religion (as the heathens impiously, and falsely suggested) that were calculated only for idiots, and fools; and which no one cou'd give his assent to, without proclaiming his own ignorance, and stupidity. How were the poor Christians ridicul'd, and charg'd with a senseless credulity, for asserting the resurrection of the body? The heathens foolishly attempted to baffle their hopes, and expectations of it, by burning the bodies of the Martyrs, and casting their ashes upon the Waters (e). When the Athenians heard St. Paul speak of the resurrection of the dead, *some mock-ed* (f). *Lucian* with a prophane sneer, derides the Christians, for expecting a resurrection to eternal life (g): and *Pliny* the elder declares it to be an impossibility, even with God himself, to call the dead to life again (h).

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(e) *Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. 5. cap. 1. Ammian. Marcellin. l. 22. cap. 11.*

(f) *Acts 17. 32.*

(g) *Πεπελεγσι γὰρ αὐτὸς οἱ ἡγεοδαίμονες, τὸ μὲρ ὅλον ἀθανάτοις ἔσεσθαι, καὶ βιώσεσθαι τὸν αἰὲν χρόνον. De Morte Peregrini.*

(h) *Nat. Hist. l. 2. cap. 7.*



2. To believe in, and to worship a crucified *Jesus*, to a blind and bigotted heathen gave great offence; and was suppos'd to be the effect of a most barbarous ignorance. Had our blessed Lord appear'd in dazling Pomp, and splendour, deck'd with all the ornaments of majesty, and power: had he beat down all opposition, and triumph'd over all his enemies, they then perhaps might have paid him homage, and adoration: but they conceiv'd a strange prejudice against the blessed *Jesus*, when they saw him a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and at last suffering death upon the Cross. A death most cruel and ignominious, and inflicted only upon slaves, and the most capital offenders (*i*). This was one of the greatest difficulties the Apostles had to encounter. To preach Christ crucify'd, was to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness (*k*). To give divine honours to a crucify'd man, merited the title of madness (*l*), in the opinion of the heathens. This *Celsus* calls (*m*) a base, and a wicked thing: and *Lucian* ridicules the Christians,

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(*i*) *Piratas, a quibus captus est, quum in deditionem redeisset, quoniam suffixurum se cruci ante juraverat, jugulari prius jussit, deinde suffigi. Sueton. de Jul. Casar. cap. 74.*

(*k*) *1 Corinth. 1. 23.*

(*l*) *Justin Mart. Apol. 1. Vide Lactan. l. 4. c. 16.*

(*m*) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 7. p. 340.*

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for worshipping a man that was crucify'd in *Palestine* (n).

3. Many of the heathens, and particularly the *Stoicks*, and *Epicureans*, absolutely deny'd a Providence, and maintain'd that the Gods had little or no concern for human affairs (o). They fancy'd that all the good, and the evil things of life, were distributed by blind chance, since they observ'd wickedness sometimes triumphant, thriving in reputation, and power: and vertue, and innocence frequently attended with infamy, poverty, and misery. Since a *Phalaris*, or a *Dionysius* had a Kingdom, and *Socrates*, one of the best of Men, a cup of poyson (p). They thought the Christians, a silly set of People, for imagining, that all the creatures in the world were under the immediate care, and direction of an allwise, and merciful Creator. And when they saw the poor Christians pinch'd with hardships and miseries, with an impious, and insulting air, they cry'd out, *where is now their God?*

4. Again. Their patience, and courage under persecutions, and afflictions, was imputed to weakness, and folly. How silly, and ridiculous

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(n) Τὸν μέγαν γὰρ ἐκείνον ἐπὶ σέβειν ἀνθρώπων, τὸν ἐν τῇ παλαισίνῃ ἀνασκοπομένῳ. — Τὸν δὲ ἀνασκοποσμένον ἐκείνον σοφιστὴν αὐτῶν προσκυνοῦσι. *de Mort. Peregrini.*

(o) *Theoph. ad Autolic. l. 2. vid. Tull. de nat. Deor. l. 3. &c.*

(p) *Min. Fel. p. 41.*

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were the Christians thought to be, when they suffer'd torments and death, and at the same time had it in their own power to escape with impunity, and to live at ease and in plenty (q)? What harm is there said the heathens in sacrificing to the Gods, in calling *Cæsar* Lord, and swearing by his *Genius* (r)? and yet those silly and deluded wretches the Christians, absolutely refus'd to pay divine honours to *Cæsar*, or any of the pagan deities: tho' they were sensible, the loss of life, and fortunes, was the unavoidable consequence of their noncompliance. What an egregious instance of folly was it reckon'd in the Christians, to despise present torments, and yet to be afraid of those that are future, and uncertain (s)? To undervalue, and part with a present Good, in hopes of a future recompence. How were they laugh'd at, for despising of riches, whilst they were oppress'd with a miserable poverty? For slighting of temporal honours, and preferments, even when they were half naked, and starving (t): and for forgiving of their enemies, when they had it in their power to do themselves justice, and to make re-

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(q) Et si hominibus videtur ineptum, ac stultum, torqueri, & mori velle, cum libere liceat abire sine noxa:

——— *Lactant. Epit. cap. 1.*

(r) *Polycarp. Mart. cap. 8.*

(s) Proh mira stultitia, & incredibilis audacia! Spernunt tormenta præsentia, dum incerta metuunt & futura: & dum mori post mortem timent, interim mori non timent. *Min. Fel. p. 79.*

(t) *Ibid.*



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prizals? This was such a behaviour, as discover'd, according to the Language of the heathens, a downright phrenzy, or at least an unaccountable ignorance, and stupidity (u).

*Thirdly.* A misrepresentation of some passages in the holy Scriptures, made by the heathens with a base, and malicious design, help'd forward the charge of ignorance. *Ye see your calling, brethren,* says St. Paul (w), *how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise: and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty: and base things of the world, and things which are despis'd, hath God chosen.* And again in the same chapter. *Christ sent me — to preach the Gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ shou'd be made of none effect. — For it is written I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, &c.* Upon these passages, *Celsus* grounds a severe, and most spiteful calumny; which is confuted at large by *Origen* (x). Because the Apostle says, *not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty were called:*

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(u) Cum enim cæperit Deo quisquam vivere, mundum contemnere, injurias suas nolle ulcisci, nolle hic divitias, non hic quærere felicitatem terrenam, contemnere omnia, Dominum solum cogitare, viam Christi non deferere, non solum a paganis dicitur insanus: sed — *Augustin. in Psalm. 48. Conciq. 2.*

(w) 1 Corinth. 1. 26.

(x) *Contra Cels. l. 3. p. 140.*

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but God chose the weak things of the World, &c. Celsus draws this base conclusion, that all the Christians were profoundly ignorant, and illiterate; men of low fortunes and mean parentage. Nay his malice carries him a strain further; and he tells us (y), that the preachers of the Gospel gave it in charge, that no one should be admitted as a convert to Christianity that was *learned, or wise, or prudent*; for these things amongst the Christians are reputed Evils. But whoever is *unlearned, or foolish, or imprudent*, may boldly come, and be admitted.

A little further Celsus gives us another specimen of his virulent malice, and ignorance. It is said of our Saviour (z), that he convers'd with Publicans and Sinners; and declar'd, that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. Upon this Celsus confidently asserts, that none were call'd to be Christians, but men of an infamous character, and flagitious behaviour. Such as were guilty of theft, sacrilege, and other capital, and enormous offences (a). These reflections are the more base, and villainous, as they must be contrary to his knowledge, and the convictions of his own mind. He cou'd not be ignorant, that the generality of the primitive Christians, were

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(y) Origen. contra Cels. l. 3. p. 137.

(z) Mat. 9. 10.

(a) Origen. contra Cels. l. 3. p. 147. vid. l. 1. p. 49. Barnab. Epist. cap. 5.

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men of excellent morals, and the strictest virtues ; and that several of them were as eminent for their knowledge, as they were for their piety.

*Fourthly.* They were said to be ignorant, because they were unacquainted with those politer parts of human literature, that were then in fashionable repute. The heathens were strangely elated with an imaginary conceit of their own wisdom, and entertain'd with contempt the most important truths, when deliver'd with plainness, and an artless simplicity. To be able to speak, or write with propriety, and method ; or to reason with judgment, and perspicuity, was not sufficient, to screen a man from the character of a rude, and illiterate barbarian : unless there was also a purity, and Elegancy of style ; artful, and elaborate periods ; and a tolerable acquaintance with the various maxims, and rules, laid down by the Philosophers. Hence *Amelius* the Philosopher calls *St. John* the Evangelist *barbarian* (b). and the same title is given to all Christians in general by *Porphry*, and others (c).

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(b) *Euseb. præpar. l. 11. cap. 19. vide Cyrill. contra Julian. l. 8.*

(c) *Oερύωνς* ——— *πρὸς τὸ βαρβαρὸν ἔχοντι τὸ λαλῆμα.*  
*Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 6. cap. 19. vide Tatian. Orat. ad Græc. Justin. Apol. Isidor. Pelus. l. 4. Epist. 27. 28. Theodoret. ad Græc. Sermon. 5. Lucian. de mort. Peregr.*



Beauty and sublimity of language wonderfully captivated the heathens, and gave a secret bias to their understandings. Without those embellishments, the best and most judicious pieces were thrown aside with scorn ; and with those, the weakest performances were read with pleasure. I have very often thought, that if some of those authors that are said to be matchless, and inimitable, were stripp'd of the ornaments of language, and their thoughts cloath'd in a common, and ordinary dress, they wou'd make a mean, and contemptible figure. Had the Roman Empire continued much longer in a flourishing condition, and due encouragement been given to men of fine parts, and Genius, the age of *Augustus* wou'd never have been the standard, for polite learning, and language ; and some of those celebrated pieces wou'd long since have been laid aside, whose authors have vainly promis'd themselves an immortality. For, every living language is constantly liable to changes, and alterations ; words grow obsolete, and then unintelligible : are first old fashion'd, and then are laid aside. And wherever care is taken to refine and beautifie a language, the writings, as well as the language, of every succeeding age, will be preferr'd to the former. 'Tis with learning and language, as it is with our cloaths : the present mode is commonly the best approv'd of : and however we may value our selves upon our present refinements, elegance  
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and exactness, posterity will treat us with the same disregard and contempt, as we bestow upon those, who liv'd an age or two ago. So that all that an author can hope for, who writes in a language, that continues a long time after to be a living one, is (as Mr. *Pope* somewhere observes) to be read in one country, and to be thrown aside at the end of one age.

The reasons why the Gospel was not at first preach'd with *excellency of speech, nor with enticing words of man's wisdom*, are very obvious. *First*, There was no occasion to make use of such a method, nor wou'd it have been of any real advantage to the Christian cause. For, elegant and rhetorical expressions, however they may tickle and please the senses, never reach the heart, nor make any deep, and lasting impressions. The world was converted by miracles, that carried an irresistible force, and conviction along with them. By the innocence, and holyness of those, that preach'd the Gospel. By their patience, and magnanimity under all their sufferings : and by the incomparable excellency of the precepts they deliver'd : which were admirably calculated, for the peace, and happiness of the world, and had a natural tendency to make men wiser, and better, happy here, and happy for ever. Without the assistance of heathen learning, the knowledge of the blessed Jesus was soon propagated in all parts. *His sound went out unto the ends of the world, and his dominion reach'd*

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reach'd from one sea to the other. Secondly, The Gospel was not preach'd with worldly wisdom, because, if this method had been pursu'd, it wou'd have produc'd infinite mischief, and rendred *the Cross of Christ* of none effect. More perhaps of the learned Gentiles wou'd have come over to Christianity: but then that worldly wisdom wou'd have been more attended to, than the word of God. The truth of God wou'd have been blended, and adulterated with learned speculations, and philosophical subtleties. *My speech and my preaching*, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. 2. 4. *was not with enticing words of mans wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit, and of power: that your faith shou'd not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

Fifthly. The Christians were said to be unlearned, and consequently ignorant, because several of them absolutely refus'd to read the writings of the heathens. We learn from *Clement of Alexandria*, that there were some Christians who condemned the reading of any prophane author, as a fruitless, and impertinent labour, and mispending of time. And that there were others, who look'd upon philosophy, as a dangerous, and destructive thing (d): that had for its author, and inventer the devil, and his Apostate Angels (e). *Clement*,

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(d) *Strom.* I. c. I. p. 326.

(e) *Strom.* l. I. c. 17. *Tertul. de cultu fam.* l. I. c. 2. *Herm. irris. Philos.*



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as he was master of a vast compass of gentile literature, and was learned in all the wisdom of the Greeks; thought himself oblig'd in his own vindication, to expose and confute this silly, and extravagant opinion: which he has effectually done, in his first book of his *Stromata*. *Origen*, we find, was censur'd by some weak and injudicious Christians, for his studying the sciences: but he shews (f), that they are not only innocent, but useful: and he justifies his own conduct in this particular, by the example of the famous *Pantannus*, and of *Heraclas*; who had such a value for the Græcian philosophy, that tho' he was a Presbyter of the Church at *Alexandria*, he wore the habit of a Philosopher (g).

The pretended Apostolical Constitutions prohibit the reading of all heathen books (h); which affords us (as I have shew'd (i) on another occasion) a most excellent argument, to prove them spurious. For, this Apostolical Decree is never once mention'd, by those who contended either for, or against the lawfulness of reading prophane authors; and besides 'tis a contradiction to the practice of *St. Paul*, who had read several of the heathen Po-

(f) *Philocal. c. 13.*

(g) *Origen. Epist. apud Euseb. Eccles. Hist. l. 6. c. 19.*

(h) *Τῶν ἐθνικῶν βιβλίων πάντων ἀπέχου. l. 1. c. 6.*

(i) Discourse of the pretended Apostolical Constitutions. chap. 10.

ets (k). There is a canon in *Gratian's* collection (l), which is of the same nature, and of the same authority, with this Apostolical Constitution.

In *Julian's* reign, and a considerable time before, the Christians had conquer'd their scruples, about the lawfulness of reading heathen authors. They were then become great proficient in all the polite, as well as more useful parts of heathen literature. They were a match for the pagans, even at their own weapons: which gave *Julian* some jealousy and uneasiness; and put him upon the publication of an Edict; by which he forbade the Christians to be instructed, in the learning of the Greeks (m).

But tho' the weakness or indiscretion of a few Christians, who condemn'd all heathen learning, might in some measure justify, and support the charge of ignorance, and want of learning; yet the Church of Christ, in all the ages of it, has produc'd many eminent and learned worthies. Whoever will be at the pains of perusing *Photius's Bibliotheca*, *Jerom's Catalogue of Ecclesiastical Writers*, and *Eusebius's History*, will soon perceive,

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(k) *Act.* 17. 28. *1 Cor.* 15. 33. *Tit.* 1. 12. vide *Socrat. Hist. Eccles.* l. 3. c. 16.

(l) *Episcopus Gentilium libros non legat. dist.* 37.

(m) Inter quæ erat illud inclemens, quod docere vetuit magistros Rhetoricos & Grammaticos, Christianos. *Amm. Marcellin.* l. 25. p. 427. Vide *Socrat. Hist. Eccles.* l. 3. cap. 12. 16.

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how little reason *Celsus*, *Porphyrus*, and *Julian* had, to represent the whole body of Christians, as a pack of rude, unciviliz'd, and illiterate Barbarians (n). Many of the Græcian Philosophers came over to Christianity ; and liv'd, and died glorious defenders of the faith. Of this sort was *Aristides*, *Justin*, *Theophilus*, *Athenagoras*, *Hermias*, *Pantænus*; besides a great many more in the second Century, whose names, as well as writings are lost, and forgotten (o). There were many other learned Christians in the same century, and the beginning of the third : as *Agrippa Castor*, *Melito*, *Apollinaris*, *Dionysius* of *Corinth*, *Pinytus*, *Miltiades*, *Clement* of *Alexandria*, *Tertullian*, *Minucius Felix*, *Africanus*, *Origen*, *Heraclas*, &c. The third and fourth centuries were bless'd with an infinite number of great men, who were strenuous advocates for the Christian cause, and eternally silenc'd the cavils of its enemies : and if there are some things to be

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(n) Discant ergo Celsus, Porphyrius, Julianus, rabidi adversus Christum canes, discant eorum sectatores, qui putant Ecclesiam, nullos Philosophos & Eloquentes, nullos habuisse Doctores, quanti & quales viri eam fundaverint, extruxerint, & ornaverint ; & desinant fidem nostram, rusticæ tantum simplicitatis arguere, suamque potius imperitiam agnoscant. *Epist. Hieron. Dextro.*

(o) Nonne vel hæc saltem fidem vobis faciunt argumenta credendi, quod ——— tam magnis ingeniis præditi Oratores, Grammatici, Rhetores, consulti juris ac medici, Philosophiæ etiam secreta rimantes, Magisteria hæc expetunt, spretis quibus paulo ante fidebant ? *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l. 2. p. 44.*

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met with in the writings of the primitive Christians, that we cannot relish or approve of; it ought to be consider'd, that learning, like all other things, has its fashions; and that every age and country has its peculiar ways of writing, and managing of an argument. Many things that displease now, were much admir'd fifteen, or sixteen hundred years ago; and what is now highly applauded, may be condemn'd by succeeding generations.

There were many learned men, both among the Jews and heathens, that entertain'd a secret value, and esteem for the Christian religion; but wou'd not openly declare in its favour; being under the influence of some carnal considerations. It was reported of *Philo*, the learned Alexandrian Jew, that he was once a Christian (p): and we are told by *Eusebius*, and *Ferom* (q), that he convers'd familiarly with *St. Peter* at Rome. Yet he does not once mention the Christians, by any name whatsoever (r). Had he made an honourable mention of them, he must have drawn the malice of his brethren upon himself, and injur'd both his interest, and his reputation: and he cou'd not per-

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(p) *Phot. Biblioth. cod. 105.*

(q) *Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 17. Catal. Script. Eccles. c. 11.*

(r) The *Therapeutæ*, of whom *Philo* gives a very great character, were certainly no Christians, as has been substantially prov'd, by many learned men.

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haps fall in with the popular clamour, and publicly expose the Christian name, without offering violence to the truth, and contradicting his own sentiments: so that his silence in this case, seems to be an approbation of that, which he had not the courage openly to commend.

The same thing may be said of *Josephus*, another learned Jew; who never throws the least reflection upon the Christians; tho' if he had done it, he wou'd thereby have oblig'd his brethren the Jews, as well as the Roman Emperours, that he courted with too servile condescensions. There is a famous passage in his history, relating to our blessed Saviour (s); but it is of a controverted authority; and indeed as it stands in the present copies of *Josephus*, carries visible marks of corruption, and interpolation. He mentions James (t) the brother *Ἰησοῦ τοῦ λεγομένου Χριστοῦ*, of *Jesus that was call'd Christ*: and tells us (as he is cited by *Origen* (u), *Eusebius*, *Ferom*, and some others) that *James* was thrown from off the top of the temple, and kill'd by the Jews, because he maintain'd, that *Jesus* was the son of God. And notwithstanding this, he gives him a very high character, and adds, that those dreadful calamities that afterwards befell Jerusa-

(s) *Antiq. l. 18. cap. 4.*

(t) *Antiq. l. 20. cap. 8.*

(u) *Contra Cels. l. 1. p. 35. l. 2. p. 69. In Matt. 13. Euseb. H. E. l. 2. cap. 23. Hieron. Catal. cap. 2. 13.*

lem, were generally look'd upon as a divine judgment upon the Jews, for their killing that righteous and holy man, *James*, surnam'd the Just.

It has been long ago observ'd of *Seneca*, the Philosopher, that in a book which is now lost (w), he smartly ridicul'd both the Religion of the Jews, and the pagan superstitions, and idolatry : but said not one word, either good or bad, of the Christians : being unwilling to censure them, and afraid to commend them (x). Whether this Philosopher held a correspondence with *St. Paul*, is uncertain at least, if not improbable. Those eight Epistles of *Seneca* to *St. Paul*, and those six from *Paul* to *Seneca* (y), being indisputably spurious. However they are of a very old date ; and thus much may be collected from them, that the forger of them proceeded upon a common and current report, that *Seneca* had a favourable opinion of the Christians. 'Tis certain *Seneca* was at Rome, when that monster *Nero* butcher'd the poor Christians, in that horrid manner, describ'd by *Tacitus* (z):

(w) *Contra Superstitiones apud Augustin. de Civit. Dei. l. 6. cap. 10, 11.*

(x) *Christianos tamen, jam tunc Judæis inimicissimos, in neutram partem commemorare ausus est ; ne vel laudaret, contra suæ patriæ veterem consuetudinem, vel reprehenderet, contra propriam forsitan voluntatem. Ibid.*

(y) *Edit. Paris. 1515. Cum Pauli Epist. & Ob-*  
*Fabri Stap. Servat.*

(z) *L. 15. Annal. p. 279.*



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and if we may believe the conjecture of a learned man (a), he was so much offended at those unparalleled cruelties, that he ask'd leave of the Emperour to retire into the country : and when this favour was refus'd him, he shut himself up in his own house, under the pretence of an indisposition (b).

It is the opinion of *Theodore* (c), that *Plutarch*, who frequently speaks in the language of a Christian, had read the Apostolical writings : and yet he never mentions the Christians, tho' he had many times a handle given him for doing it, and his subject naturally lead him that way. He died at an advanc'd age, about the end of *Trajan's* reign, when the Christians, by *Pliny's* confession, were grown very numerous : so that his silence cannot possibly be attributed to his ignorance of, or unacquaintance with the Christian sect ; but rather to the reason mention'd by *St. Austin*, concerning *Seneca*.

The first century produc'd several more great men, who never reproach'd the Christians, but cou'd not forbear giving a sting at the Jews, whenever they came in their way (d). Nay, what is

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(a) *Lud. vires. Comment. in cap. 11. Augustin. de Civitat. Dei. l. 6.*

(b) *Vide Tacit. Annal. l. 15. p. 280.*

(c) *Serm. 2. de Princip.*

(d) *Vide Quintilian. Inst. Orator. l. 3. cap. 9. Plin. Nat. Hist. l. 13. cap. 14.*

highly remarkable, there is not one of the wits, or satyrists of that age, that lampoons the Christians. Neither *Petronius*, nor *Persius*, neither *Juvenal*, nor *Martial*, to say nothing of *Lucan*, or *Silius Italicus*. It is agreed by some of the best commentators upon *Juvenal*, that in one place he alludes to *Nero's* cruelty upon the Christians (e): and why did he not take that opportunity of abusing them? He liv'd, as 'tis said, to the age of fourscore years, till the beginning of *Adrian's* reign; and consequently had seen three persecutions of the Christians. He lash'd with the keenest satyr, the vices and follies, the superstitions, luxury, and lewdness of his own times; but has not one reflection upon that *Atheistical sect of Christians*: that cursed, and *destructive Superstition*, that prevail'd then at *Rome* (f): not so much as one single line, that is applicable to the Christians (g). What imaginable reason can be assign'd for it, but this, he cou'd find nothing blameable in the con-

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(e) *Pone Tigillinum: Tæda lucebis in illa,*

*Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo gutture fumant. Sat. 1.*

(f) *Repressaq; in præsens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat, non modo per Judæam originem ejus mali, sed per urbem etiam. Tacit. Annal. l. 15.*

(g) Some have imagin'd, that *Juvenal* describes the poverty of the Christians, under the name of Jews, in these lines:

*Nunc sacri fontis nemus & Delubra locantur*

*Judæis: quorum Cophinus, sænumq; supellex. Sat. 3.*

But whoever compares these, with *Versè 543. Sat. 6.* must allow this to be a mistake.

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duct of a Christian? This conjecture will appear more probable by observing, *First*, that *Juvenal* was a man of virtue and morality, and stood clear of those vices he ridicul'd: and *Secondly*, that he treated the heathen Gods with but little respect, and like a man, who look'd upon them as fictitious Deities (*b*).

St. *Austin* tells us (*i*) of one *Victorinus* in the fourth century, a man eminently learned and eloquent, who refused for a long time to make a publick profession of Christianity, for fear of disoblighing his heathen friends. There were doubtless, a great many more under the same circumstances: who were secretly convinc'd of the truth, and excellency of the Christian religion; but disguis'd their sentiments, being under the influence of some worldly motives, and views. By an open declaration in favour of the Christians, they were apprehensive of incurring the displeasure of those, that they had reason, either to love, or to fear. They were afraid of exposing themselves to difficulties, and dangers: of risquing their ease, and security, and hazarding of life, or fortune, or both. But the danger of sacrificing a reputation for learning, and worldly wisdom, was one of the strongest prejudices against a publick profession of

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(*b*) *Sat. 6. vers. 60. Sat. 13. a vers. 40. ad vers. 53.*

(*i*) *Confess. l. 3. cap. 2.*



the Christian faith. For a learned Philosopher to go over to the Christians, was openly proclaiming his former ignorance and error, which but few were very willing to own. 'Twas bartering of fame, for ignominy : and exchanging of wealth, and honour, for poverty, and contempt.

There were others, that for some time made an open profession of the Christian faith ; but when they saw a storm arising, they took shelter among the infidels, and deserted the society of Christians. *Porphyry*, the most learned, and shrewdest adversary, the Christians ever had, we are told, embrac'd the Christian religion (*k*) : being probably instructed in it by *Origen*, with whom he was acquainted in his youth (*l*) : but being beaten by some Christians at *Cæsarea* in *Palæstine*, he resented this ill usage so much, that he not only went off from the Christians, but set himself to write against them, with all imaginable spite and virulence (*m*). There were probably other reasons, that forwarded this Apostasy : perhaps his covetous, or ambitious views were baulk'd ; or he found his reputation in danger of being eclips'd, by herding with *illiterate barbarians*. In a word,

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(*k*) *Euseb. apud Socrat. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. cap. 23. Augustin. de Civit. Dei, l. 10. cap. 28. Niceph. l. 10. c. 36. Vide Luc. Holsten. de vita Porph. c. 5.*

(*l*) *Euseb. l. 6. cap. 19. Vincent. Lirinens. cap. 23.*

(*m*) *Socrat. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. cap. 23.*

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so great, and so general were the corruptions in the heathen world ; so strong were those prejudices, that lay against Christianity ; so powerfully did both interest, and reputation plead, in behalf of gentile idolatry and superstition, that it must be a most wonderful thing (and what nothing cou'd possibly have effected, but that Being, with whom nothing is impossible) that so many Philosophers, and so many learned men, shou'd renounce not only their inveterate errors, but also their temporal happiness, and ease, and believe in a crucify'd Jesus. But Great is truth, and will prevail ! and especially when it is assisted by Heaven, and supported by the arm of Almighty God.

I now proceed to the second branch of the article, which charges the Christians with poverty, with lowness of circumstances, and baseness of extraction. It must be own'd that most of the first converts to Christianity, were of the lower part of mankind : and that still generally speaking, 'tis such as those who now pay the greatest regard to the duties of religion. By far the greater part of that small stock of vertue and goodness, that is to be met with in the world, is found amongst men, that are situated in an inferiour rank. They were men of a mean and servile condition, that came to the wedding supper, and as such as those were the first, so 'tis probable, they'll be the last Christians in the world. Those that are plac'd in a superiour and more honourable class, have generally

ly speaking, nothing so little at heart as their duty to their Creator : and leave the drudgery of religion to men of narrow fortunes, of grief, and misery. It frequently happens, that the higher a man is plac'd in the world, the greater in proportion is his neglect of his duty : the more scandalous his contempt of religion, and the more egregious his impieties.

The reasons why the first converts were men of a middle, or inferiour station, were as follows. Some of those reasons are mention'd in the Parable, *Luke 14. 16.* and particularly these two, worldly advantages, and worldly pleasures : intimated by buying a piece of ground, and marrying a wife. One condition of admittance into the kingdom of Jesus Christ, was renouncing all temporal profits and pleasures, when they stood in competition with their duty. *Whoever hates not, says our Lord, father and mother, and life it self for my sake, he cannot be my Disciple.* Now since self-denial is enjoyn'd every disciple of the Lord Jesus, 'tis plain that those who enjoy'd the least of the good things of life, wou'd be the most ready to embrace the Christian religion : and those wou'd naturally have the greatest aversion and dislike to it, who were in possession of the largest fortunes. Agreeably to this, we may observe that the young man in the Gospel, who had kept the commandments ; and on all other accounts seem'd qualify'd for a disciple of the Lord Jesus, when our Saviour bad him *sell*



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*what he had, and give to the poor, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.* The duties enjoyn'd a Christian, will seem more or less difficult, according to a man's circumstances. Self-denial will be no hardship to him, that is accusom'd to want, and poverty : nor will mortification be a difficult task to one, that has been a long time acquainted with misery. But for a man to renounce all temporal advantages, when he has got a very great share in them : and to retire from the world, when he might live happily in it, is what human nature will not so readily comply with : and this I take to be one principal reason, why the first that came over to Christianity, were generally speaking, the inferior part of mankind.

2. But we may be able to account for it another way, why men of a prosperous condition, and of plentiful fortunes, shou'd not so readily embrace the Christian religion ; nor when they have embrac'd it, so strictly observe the duties it enjoyns. Those earthly treasures too often have the supreme command of our affections, and engross our time, and our thoughts. They give a fatal interruption to our duty, and divert us from the care of the one thing needful. Do not we see now a-days, many a one possess'd with the devil of avarice, whose desires increase with their possessions ; who have not the least regard for any thing, but what promotes their gain, and advanceth their interest ? Like *Judas*, they'll betray even  
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their Saviour for money ; and for temporal enjoyments which are but for a moment, they'll pawn an inheritance eternal in the heavens. An immoderate care and regard for the good things of this life, is inconsistent with a true sense of our duty, or at least, with a strict and religious observation of it : 'tis therefore no wonder, the poor, the halt, and the blind, that is men of an inferiour station, came to the wedding supper, when the rich and the mighty rejected the invitation, and alledg'd by way of excuse, that they had *bought a piece of ground, or five yoke of oxen, and must needs go and see them.*

3. The lower part of mankind were the first converts to Christianity, because they were exercis'd with more afflictions, and were strangers to delicacies and pleasures, which are scarcely to be reconcil'd with the duties of Christianity ; have a fatal tendency to debauch men both in principle and practice, and to alienate their affections towards God, and their duty. Worldly pleasures when they insinuate themselves into our good graces, entirely take us off from our duty ; or at least, those parts of it, which are contrary to those pleasing allurements, and gratifications of sense. The strictest virtue, and the greatest prosperity, seldom, or never meet together. He that abounds in plenty and pleasures, and meets with all the satisfaction this world can afford him, very often forgets to make those returns of gratitude, and obedience,

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obedience, that are due to his infinitely kind benefactor. What occasion has he to mind the duties of religion, when he's happy without it? Let miserable creatures petition heaven for relief, and take care to observe the laws of their Creator. He's in possession of all that his heart can desire; and thinks all acts of religion impertinent, and superfluous, under a state of ease, of happiness, and pleasure. Some of the Precepts of Christianity are quite opposite, to that licentiousness and ease, that he indulgeth himself in, and therefore the thoughts of them are rejected, for fear they shou'd damp his pleasures, and spoil the relish of his temporal enjoyments. But men of an inferior class, are generally more sensible of the wants, and calamities that attend human nature. This brings them to sober reflections. This makes them examine into the source of their miseries, and apply themselves to God, who alone can relieve them. This makes them form steady resolutions to forsake sin, that is the fountain of all misery; and to discharge those duties, which alone can make men completely happy.

4. The middle or lower part of mankind are not commonly tainted with those capital vices, that some are guilty of, who move in a higher sphere; and therefore are better qualify'd for the reception of sacred truths, and more sincerely dispos'd to obey the divine will. It is God's holy spirit that leads men into all truth; and without his

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his assistance, we shall commit mistakes, even about the most easy, and obvious matters: but the greatest innocence, and sincerity of heart, has the best title to God's co-operating Grace: on the contrary, the most wicked men banish away the Holy Spirit, and are left to the weak guidance of their own fallible reason: and very often, notwithstanding their natural abilities, reject the plainest truths, and run into such mistakes, as will prove destructive to their eternal interest, and salvation.

5. It pleased Almighty God, to call the first Christians from the lower class of mankind, as being most suitable to the all-wise, and good ends of his Providence. He chose those that were reputed foolish and ignorant, to confound the wise: and the weak things of the world, to pull down those that were mighty, and exalted. He made use of instruments, seemingly contemptible, to bring about a mighty change: that a supernatural power might be more visibly display'd, and the divine excellency of the Christian religion (n).

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(n) Prædicatio Christiana non indiget pompa & cultu sermonis, ideoque Piscatores, homines imperiti electi sunt, qui Evangelizarent: ut Doctrinæ veritas ipsa se commendaret, teste virtute, ne hominum versutia, & calliditate humanæ sapientiæ acceptabilis videretur, non veritate: sicut Disciplinæ ab hominibus inventæ, in quibus non ratio, non virtus, sed verborum quæritur compositio; ac per hoc gloriam suam quærit, qui fidem Christi verbis exornare vult: obscurat enim illam splendore verborum, ut non illa, sed ipse laudetur, *Comment. ad 1 Cor. cap. 1. inter op. Ambros.*

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Had none but the great, and the mighty been employ'd in that important business, of bringing men from the power of darkness unto God: their success might have been imputed to their own wisdom, power, or abilities. Perhaps it would then have been suspected, that they got converts, by bribing mens understandings with their splendour, and greatness; and by terrifying them into compliance, with their power. But that Christianity should be planted, and propagated by such ordinary means: that a few illiterate Fishermen shou'd baffle all the learning of *Rome*, and *Athens*; and settle a Church, against which the gates of hell cou'd never prevail, argued their cause, to be the cause of God, and the Christian religion to be of divine Original.

But tho' *not many mighty, not many noble were called* at first, and there were but few of the first converts, that cou'd boast either of riches, or an honourable extraction: yet in a little time, there were great numbers of people, of all ranks, and conditions of life, of great eminence, and distinction, that renounc'd their old Idolatry, and became the disciples of Jesus Christ. *Celsus* with his usual front, roundly asserts it for a truth, that the Christian society consisted of none but poor women, and children, servants, paultry Mechanics, and such like (o): and his friend *Lucian* re-

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(o) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 3. p. 141, 144.*

presents them as a parcel of old women, widows, and fatherless children (p). But this is a base and malicious calumny: for if there were some that were great and honourable, amongst the very first converts to Christianity, as 'tis certain there were (q), and the words of the Apostle 1 Cor. 1. 26. imply as much: the number of converts of that superior class, must be very much increas'd, about the middle of the second century, when *Celsus* (r), and his cotemporary *Lucian* wrote. At the latter end of the first century, or the beginning of the second, we find by *Pliny* (s), there were many Christians, *Omnis ordinis, & omnis ætatis*. Of all ranks, and all ages. And can it possibly be imagin'd, that forty, or fifty years afterwards, there shou'd be no Christians, but what were of the dreggs of the people, and the lowest, and most despicable part of mankind? Not many years after *Celsus*, *Tertullian* speaks of *Clarissimos viros, & Clarissimas feminas*, people of note and eminence of both sexes, that were Christians (t). and in order to divert *Scapula* from persecuting the

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(p) *De Mort. Peregrin.* p. 594, 5.

(q) *John.* 4. 53. 19. 38. *Act.* 17. 12. 34. *Act.* 13. 12; *Philip.* 4. 22. &c.

(r) *Origen. contra. Cels.* l. 1. p. 8.

(s) *Epist. ad Trajan.* 97. l. 10.

(t) *Ad Scap. cap.* 4.



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Christians any longer, he tells him (*u*), how prodigiously great the number of Christians was. That among them he might find some principal, and leading men : some that were nearly related to his own friends, and of the same rank, and quality with himself.

In the first ages of the Church, when persons of distinction, of wealth, and honourable extraction, came over to the Christians, they generally laid aside their former pomp, and greatness : retir'd from the world, and liv'd in a contemptible obscurity : distributed their substance amongst their indigent brethren ; and sometimes betook themselves to a mean, and sordid occupation. It was this, in all probability, that gave *Celsus*, and others a handle, to represent the Christians as an ignoble, and beggarly race of men. But to say that none of the first Christians were noble, or honourably descended, is a calumny made up of ignorance, malice, and falshood, and becomes none so well as a *Celsus*, or a *Julian* (*w*).

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(*u*) Quid facies de tantis millibus hominum, tot viris ac fœminis, omnis sexus, omnis ætatis, omnis dignitatis, offerentibus se tibi ? ——— Quid ipsa Carthago passura est, decimanda a te, cum ——— viderit illic fortasse & tui ordinis viros & matronas, & principales quasque personas, & amicorum tuorum vel propinquos, vel amicos ? *Ibid.* a. 5.

(*w*) Vide *Cyrill. contra Julian.* l. 6.

C H A P.



## CHAP. IX.

### *The charge of Magick Arts accounted for.*

**W**E have not much reason to wonder, that the Primitive Christians shou'd be charg'd with practising of magick arts, when the Lord of life himself, was said to cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the Devils. That our blessed Saviour did many great and wonderful works, the Jews themselves cou'd not deny: but that wicked and perverse people wou'd not acknowledge, that they proceeded from a divine and Almighty power, but blasphemously ascrib'd them to a correspondence with some wicked, and infernal agent. The heathens also confes'd, that our Lord and his Apostles heal'd diseases; gave sight to the blind; made the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk: but they resolv'd all those miraculous cures into, I know not what, magical powers, and curious, and clandestine arts.

*Celsus*, that impious, and bungling advocate for the pagan cause, by perusing St. *Matthew's* Gospel had found, that our infant Saviour was carried into *Ægypt*, to avoid the cruelty of *Herod*. Up-  
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on this he has the impudence to tell us (a), that our Lord, whilst in *Ægypt*, learnt those curious arts, by the assistance of which, he afterwards did so many mighty, and wonderful things. The *Ægyptians*, according to *Celsus*, divided a human body into thirty six parts (b); and imagin'd, that over each of these presided a dæmon, or ætherial deity: and when any one part was affected, or out of order, it was only making supplication to the dæmon, that had the care of it, and the part wou'd be healed, and made perfectly whole. With such wretched, and ridiculous stuff, does this wonderful Philosopher attempt, to account for those miraculous cures, perform'd by the eternal Son of God!

There were other stupid fables invented by the heathens, in order to depreciate the miracles wrought by the Apostles. Both *St. Peter*, and *St. Paul* were said, to be well instructed in magical arts (c). Some said the Christian religion was to last only three hundred and sixty five years, and that the continuance of it so long, was owing to *Peter's* cutting a child of a year old in pieces, or to his great skill in clandestine, and magick arts (d). And for this the heathens produc'd a

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(a) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 1. p. 30. Arnob. adv. Gentes. l. 1. p. 25.*

(b) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 8. p. 416.*

(c) *Augustin. de Consens. Evangelist. l. 1. c. 9, 10, 11.*

(d) *Augustin. de Civit. Dei. l. 18. c. 53. 54.*

pretended



pretended oracle. But when the Christian religion surviv'd that fatal period, its enemies were hard put to it for new subterfuges, and new inventions, to prop up their sinking cause. Whatever they might say to the contrary, 'tis certain they were convinc'd in their own minds, that the miracles wrought by the Apostles, and primitive Christians, were wrought by the power of God, and in the name of Jesus Christ : for, in their enchantments, and diabolical tricks, they themselves made use of the holy name of Jesus (e) ; and sometimes call'd upon the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (f).

1. The primitive Christians were call'd magicians, because they did many mighty works by the assistance of God's holy spirit : which cou'd not be effected by any visible, and ordinary cause; and were incontestably superior, and contrary to the stated laws of nature. For how long a time the Church of Christ was bless'd with those extraordinary, and wonderful gifts, I cannot precisely determine. We have substantial, and express evidence of their continuance, much later than *Celsus's* time, which is enough for my purpose.

About the middle of the secon'd century *Justin* tells *Trypho* (g), *at this day Christians have the gift of*

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(e) *Augustin. Exposit. in Evangel. Johan. cap. I. Tractat. 7.*

(f) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 4. p. 183, 184.*

(g) *Dial. cum Tryph. p. 308.*

(h) *Ibid. p. 247, 302.*

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*Prophecy*, and cast out devils, which tremble at the name of Jesus (*h*). There is a famous passage in *Irenæus* (*i*) to this purpose, cited by *Eusebius* (*k*). Great and many, he says, were those gifts and graces, which the Lord conferr'd upon the faithful in his time. Some cast out devils; and others heal'd diseases by the imposition of hands. Some rais'd the dead to life again; and others had the gift of prophecy, and of tongues. *Tertullian* speaks of several honourable persons cur'd by the Christians, of divers infirmities (*l*). He tells a remarkable story of one *Proculus*, that was in great favour with the Emperour *Severus*, whom he had cur'd of a distemper, by anointing him with oyl (*m*). In the third century *Origen* tells us, many unclean spirits were cast out by prayer, and by the invocation of the name of Jesus (*n*). He himself had seen many an one deliver'd from dreadful distempers, and calamities, by the name of Jesus Christ: which, it was not in the power of men, or of devils, to remove (*o*). Again he says (*p*), when our Lord first began to preach, there were

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(*i*) *L. 2. cap. 58.*

(*k*) *Hist. Eccles. L. 5. cap. 7.*

(*l*) *Ad Scap. cap. 4. Apol. cap. 23. ad Scap. c. 2.*

(*m*) *Ad Scap. cap. 4.*

(*n*) *Contra Cels. l. 3. p. 133. l. 7. p. 334, 376.*

(*o*) *Contra Cels. l. 3. p. 124. Vide l. 2. p. 62, 80.*

(*p*) *Ibid. l. 7. p. 337.*

some visible signs of the Holy Spirit, or effects of his divine, and miraculous power. After our Lord's Ascension, there were more: some time after that fewer; but even now, there are some remains of that miraculous power (q). *Arnobius*, at the beginning of the fourth century, tells us (r), the name of Christ drives away evil spirits, and makes the oracles dumb. And *Lactantius*, about the same time says (s), at this very day, Christians cast out wicked spirits, by the name of their master, and by the sign of the Cross.

Thus we see for the first three hundred years (to look no further) there were some Christians, endowed with a power from on high: and by the divine assistance did many wonderful things, in the name of Jesus Christ. And those mighty works were perform'd openly, and in the face of the Sun. The facts were evident, and notorious, and the heathens themselves had not the face to deny it: but they endeavour'd to account for those miraculous cures in such a manner, as not to hurt the interest of paganism, nor to do any honour to the Christian religion. They wou'd not own those mighty works to be the effect of a divine and

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(q) Vide *Min. Fel.* p. 252, 254: *Cyprian. ad Demetrian. ad Donat.* p. 4. *Firmic. de errore profan. relig.*

(r) *Contra Gentes.* l. 1. p. 14, 27.

(s) *L. 4. cap. 27. Vide. l. 2. cap. 15. l. 5. cap. 21.*



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Almighty power, because that was giving up at once the pagan cause ; which right or wrong, they were resolv'd to maintain ; that was acknowledging the Lord Jesus, in whose name those miracles were wrought, to be truly the son of God : and that was disparaging their own pretended deities, which they were sensible, cou'd not effect any miraculous cures. Under these straits and perplexities, they took up a resolution (as contrary to common sense, as common justice) to charge the Christians with clandestine, or magick arts. With an intercourse, or familiarity with some wicked, infernal spirits. This I take to be the original foundation of the calumny. A calumny that begun with Christianity it self, and probably continu'd, as long as there were any of those extraordinary, and miraculous gifts, and graces, in the Christian Church.

2. The primitive hereticks were partly the occasion of this calumny. Many of them used curious, and diabolical arts, and kept up an intimate familiarity with the heathen magicians, jugglers, astrologers, and such like (t). *Simon* the Arch-heretick did so many stupendous things by his skill in magick, that by some people he was reputed a God (u) ; and a great many years after his death,

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(t) *Tertul. præscrip. ad. Her. cap. 43.*

(u) *Justin. Apol. 1. Iren. adv. Heres. cap. 20.*

we are told (w), there were some hereticks who had such an honour for his memory, that they ador'd his very picture, and offer'd up sacrifices to it. The hereticks *Mark*, and *Menander*, were also famous magicians, that impos'd upon ignorant people, by their hellish tricks, and delusions (x). There were other hereticks of the same stamp, that pretended to do mighty feats by sorcery, and enchantments. To keep up their reputation with the deluded populace, and to ape the miracles wrought in the name, and by the power of Jesus Christ, they had recourse to the vilest, the blackest arts; and scrupled not to call in all the powers of darkness, to their assistance. Now since the worst of hereticks, as we are told by *Justin* (y), were called Christians, 'tis probable the heathens, by observing the magical operations of some hereticks, might take occasion to calumniate the whole Christian name.

But further. The behaviour of some hereticks, that in reality were no magicians, was such as gave the heathens some sinister suspicions. The *Valentinians*, *Basilidians*, and several more of the *Gnostick* heresy, had a barbarous and unintelligible cant, and jargon among them (z); which

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(w) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 2. c. 13.*

(x) *Justin. Apol. 1. Iren. l. 1. cap. 8, 9, 21. Euseb. Hist. Ecc. lib. 3. cap. 26.*

(y) *Apol. 1.*

(z) *Iren. l. 1. c. 18. Euseb. H. E. l. 4. c. 7.*

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look'd like conjuration. Besides, according to their absurd Scheme, there was an innumerable company of celestial powers, or Governours (a), to whom they made their daily addressees, and supplications: which the heathens took for an invocation of dæmons, or a familiarity with infernal spirits. Hence *Celsus* tells us (b), he had seen some barbarous writings of the Christians, that contain'd nothing but the *names of dæmons, and juggling tricks, or enchantments*. And in another place he says (c), the Christians were able to do mighty feats, by the *name, or the invocation of certain dæmons*. By which it appears, that *Celsus* applies all the nonsense, and absurdities of some hereticks, to the whole body of Christians: and charges them all, with practising of magick arts, only because the *Ophiani*, and other hereticks of those times, behav'd themselves like conjurers.

3. The privacy of the Christian worship created some evil suspicions, and help'd forward the calumny. The first Christians had generally their religious assemblies in the night, at which none were allow'd to be present but the *μύητοι*, or those that were baptiz'd. This secrecy, and caution, the heathens cou'd not, or wou'd not account for,

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(a) Vide *Iren. Epiphan. Theodoret. Her. fab. Origen. contra Cels. Tertul. contra Valentin. &c.*

(b) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 6. p. 302.*

(c) *Ibid. l. 1. p. 7.*



without supposing some conspiracy against the publick peace, at those nocturnal meetings; or some magieal operations, that were always managed with the utmost privacy, and therefore call'd *secret, and clandestine arts* (d). Tertullian dissuades his wife, in case she surviv'd him, from marrying with a heathen; and with great solidity of reasoning, describes the inconveniencies, that wou'd of necessity attend, so unequal a match. Amongst other things, he tells her, a heathen husband wou'd suspect her guilty of magical operations, when she rose in the night, to go to prayer; and when she sign'd her self with the sign of the cross (e).

It is entirely needless, and impertinent, to offer at a vindication of the primitive Christians; or to shew how innocent they were of this heavy charge. As soon as any heathen became a sincere convert to the Christian faith, he renounc'd the devil, and all his works: abandon'd all magical tricks, and delusions (f): and those that before had used *curious arts, brought their books, and burnt them before all men* (g). Whatever wicked arts, or superstitious fooleries have been practis'd, in the corrupt ages of Christianity; 'tis certain,

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(d) *Arnob. adv. Gentes. l. 1. p. 25.*

(e) *Tertul. ad uxorem. l. 2. cap. 5.*

(f) *Vide Justin. Apol. 1.*

(g) *Acts. 19. 19.*

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the primitive Christians stood clear of all imputations of that kind. They treated with a just abhorrence, all southsayers, fortune-tellers, enchanters, and diviners of all kinds: and they are expressly condemn'd, as wicked, and detestable, by several canons of the Greek church (*b*).

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(*b*) Vide *Concil. Ancy. Can. 24. Laod. 36. Trul. 61. Canon. Basil. 7, 65.*

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**CHAP.**



## CHAP. X.

### *The Heresies, and divisions in primitive Christianity, accounted for.*

**T**Here have been in all ages of Christianity some, that have disturb'd the peace of the church; that have maintain'd either some singular, extravagant opinions; or without any apparent necessity, have made an unreasonable separation from the catholick communion. But as the primitive Christians were some of the best of men; so the primitive hereticks were the vilest monsters the world ever saw. Even while the Apostles were sowing the good seed, the enemy scattered tares: but as soon as those pillars of the truth, those glorious defenders of the faith were crown'd with martyrdom, and translated from this life to a better: then blasphemous error, and impiety appear'd bareface, and made an impudent progress (a). All the united powers of hell vigorously engag'd, to pull down the church of Christ. Many agents of satan were sent abroad, under the

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(a) *Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. 3. c. 32.*



disguise of Christians ; who attempted to undermine the foundations of our holy faith. Those enemies of all righteousness, and children of the devil, did not cease to pervert the right way of the Lord : and assuming to themselves the title of Christians, they gave both Jew and Gentile occasion to blaspheme (*b*). All their numberless errors, divisions, and infinite contrariety of opinions, were, very unfairly, plac'd to the account of the whole Christian society.

Whatever those vile miscreants pretended, they had no manner of title to the honourable appellation of Christians ; nor were their errors any more chargeable upon primitive Christianity, than pagan idolatry, or those various absurdities, maintain'd by the heathen philosophers. Tis true, the generality of them asserted there was one God : but they entertain'd impious, and most unworthy notions of the supreme Being (*c*). Some of them openly blasphem'd the God of Israel, the Almighty Creator of the universe (*d*). Others call'd themselves the sons of God : the Saviours of mankind, and promised their followers an immortality (*e*). The primitive hereticks unanimously de-

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(*b*) Vide *Justin. dial. cum Tryph.* p. 253. *Origen. contra Cels.* l. 5. p. 272.

(*c*) *Iren. l. 1. c. 19.* *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 6. p. 802.

(*d*) *Iren. l. 1. c. 28, 29.* *Justin. Apol.* 1.

(*e*) *Euseb. Hist. Eccl.* l. 3. c. 26. *Origen. contra Cels.* l. 6. p. 382. *Iren. l. 1. c. 20.*

ny'd (f) the incarnation of the *λογος*, or divine word. They maintain'd that the Lord Jesus Christ, was neither manifested in the flesh, nor suffer'd upon the Cross in reality, *sed putative tantum*, but onely in appearance, or imagination: and hence they were stil'd *Docetæ* (g); and *Tertul-lian*, with his usual smartness, calls them (h) *imaginary Christians*. Many of them pretended to a more perfect degree of knowledge, than was vouchsafed either the prophets, or Apostles (i). Some had the impudence to put themselves upon an equality with the blessed Jesus; and others claim'd a superiority (k). The *Ophiani*, according to *Origen* (l), were so far from being Christians, that they blasphem'd our Saviour as much as *Celsus* did; and before they admitted any one a member of their society, they oblig'd him to curse the Lord Jesus Christ.

They treated the sacred Scriptures with a shameful irreverence; and eras'd, interpolated, and alter'd just as they pleas'd. Confront them with sacred scripture, and immediately they condemn'd it, as of no authority (m): and when

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(f) *Secundum autem nullam sententiam hæreticorum, Verbum Dei caro factum est. Iren. l. 3. c. 11.*

(g) *Iren. l. 5. c. 1. Ignat. Epist. ad Smyrn. ad Trall.*

(h) *Contra Valentin.*

(i) *Iren. l. 1. c. 1.*

(k) *Ibid. l. 1. c. 24.*

(l) *Contra Cels. l. 6. p. 294.*

(m) *Iren. l. 3. c. 2.*

they cou'd find nothing in the sacred volumes, that cou'd possibly be brought to countenance their errors, they made a scripture of their own. Out of the books of the old and new Testament, they selected some passages (*n*), of an obscure, or ambiguous interpretation, which they wrested to their own purpose. These they treated with the utmost veneration, and respect: but as for the rest, they were slighted, and contemn'd. The *Valentinians*, and *Marcionites* alter'd, and mangled the Gospels (*o*), and particularly that of St. *Luke* (*p*). The *Ebionites* admitted only of St. *Matthew's* Gospel, and rejected all St. *Paul's* Epistles, calling him an Apostate from the Law (*q*).

Some of them, no doubt of it, were regularly baptiz'd, but the generality of them had a form of baptism, of a very strange, and singular nature, and as distant as possible from that, which was instituted by our blessed Lord. There is nothing more shocking, and impious, than those various methods of Initiation, they made use of, which are set down at large by *Irenæus* (*r*). As for the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, they entirely

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(*n*) *Clem. Alex. Strom.* 3. p. 528. *Strom.* 7. p. 891, 893.

(*o*) *Origen. contra Gels.* l. 2. p. 77.

(*p*) *Iren.* l. 3. c. 11.

(*q*) *Iren.* l. 1. c. 26.

(*r*) *Adv. Hæres.* l. 1. c. 18.



neglected it (s). For the Eucharistical bread and wine, being a mystical representation of our Lord's body that was broken, and of his blood that was shed upon the Cross ; they cou'd not celebrate the Eucharist, seeing they deny'd the reality of Christ's sufferings, without contradicting their own wicked notions, and confuting of themselves.

Their morals were as corrupt, and as scandalous, as their principles. They neither believ'd nor acted, in any one respect, like Christians. Nor indeed were they ever treated by the primitive Church, as mistaken, or erroneous Christians : but as a pack of profligate pagans, atheists, monsters, and emissaries of the devil. The Christians declin'd all commerce, or society with them (t) : which offended them very much, and raised many heavy complaints (u). *Polycarp*, accidentally meeting with the heretick *Marcion*, call'd him *Primogenitus Satanae*, the first born of Satan. We are told that *St. John* was once a going into the Bath at *Ephesus*, but espying the heretick *Cerintus* there, he started back ; and said, *he was afraid the bath wou'd tumble*

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(s) Εὐχαριστίας καὶ προσευχῆς (l. προσφορῆς) ἀπέχονται, διὰ τὸ μὴ ὁμολογεῖν τὴν Εὐχαριστίαν σάκχα εἶναι τὸ σωτήριον ἡμεῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, τὴν ὑπὸ ἀμαρτιῶν ἡμεῶν παθεῖσαν. *Ignat. Epist. ad Smyrn. cap. 7.*

(t) *Iustin. Dial. cum Tryph. p. 253. Iren. l. 3. c. 3.*

(u) Queruntur de nobis, quod cum similia nobiscum sentiant, sine causa abstineamus nos a communicatione eorum : & cum eadem dicant, & eandem habeant doctrinam, vocemus illos hæreticos. *Iren. l. 3. c. 15.*

down, because such an enemy of the truth was in it (w). In a word, those hereticks were not Christians in any sense, or degree whatsoever: nor were they ever reputed so, by the primitive Christians. They were as much enemies to the truth, and at as great a distance from it, even as that vile impostor *Mahomet*, who seems to have imitated, in many particulars, those primitive hereticks (x).

2. The primitive hereticks were not by far so numerous, as has been represented. 'Tis true, we have the names of above twenty heresies in the two first centuries; but then we are to observe, that one and the same heresy frequently went under different names. Thus the *Carpocratians*, *Valentinians*, &c, were also call'd *Gnosticks*, from their pretended superiority in knowledge: and *Borboritæ*, from their filthy conversation. Those that condemn'd marriage, and certain meats, as unlawful, were call'd *Tatiani*, *Severiani*, and *Continentes*. And, to give but one instance more, the *Montanists* were also styl'd *Cataphrygians*, *Pepuzians*, *Priscillians*, *Quintillians*, &c. This diversity of names, seems to have led some authors into mistakes: and has put them upon writing a catalogue of more heresies, than in reality there ever were.

Besides, The erroneous Tenets propagated by the primitive hereticks, are reducible to a very

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(w) *Iren. l. 3. cap. 3.*

(x) *Vide Hist. of Montanism. chap. 19.*

few heads: and strictly speaking, there were not above three, or four heresies, for the first two hundred years. For, every succeeding heretick refind upon his master; was ambitious of making new discoveries; made some little alterations, or additions, and was fond of giving a new name to a heresy, that was onely an old one, in a new dress. That this was the case, we are told by *Irenæus* (y), an author, of indisputable credit, and great antiquity. *Menander* was *Simon's* disciple, and made some improvements upon his master's scheme. *Saturninus* copied after *Menander* (z); but took the liberty of making some variations, and changing the name of the heresy. Those that succeeded, went on in the same method; so that there might be the names of an hundred heresies, tho' all grafted upon one common stock, and without varying from one another, in the most material, and essential points.

3. Most of the heresies in the two first centuries continued but a little time. There was always indeed one heresy or other on foot; but the

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(y) Ab his autem qui prædicti sunt jam multæ propages multarum hæresum factæ sunt, eo quod multi ex ipsis, immo omnes volunt Doctores esse, & abscedere quidem ab hæresi in qua fuerunt. Aliud autem dogma ab alia sententia, & deinceps alteram ab altera componentes, nova docere insistant, semetipsos adinventores sententiæ quamcunque compegerint, enarrantes. *Iren. l. 1. cap. 30. vide cap. 18. vide Theodoret. de Simon. Epiphan. de Menan.*

(z) *Iren. l. 1. cap. 22. Euseb. H. E. l. 4. cap. 7.*



elder commonly gave place to the younger; and the preceding heresy was lost, and absorb'd, in the following one (a). Thus *Cerinthianism* was lost in *Cerdonism*, and *Cerdonism* in *Marcionism*. The *Simonians*, strictly so call'd, were of a very short continuance (b): and the *Menandrians* the same (c). *Origen* tells us, there were not thirty *Simonians* in the whole world, in his time (d): and his meaning is, he did not know of any: for in another place he says, ἡ δὲ λαὸς ὅλη τῆς οἰκουμένης Σιμωνιακοί. *There are no Simonians in any part of the world* (e). Several of those heresies were extinct, almost as soon as they appear'd (f): and there were but very few of them, that long surviv'd their impious authors. The *Montanist* heresy kept its ground a long time, and scattered its contagion in many distant places. And the reason was this; *Montanus*, and his followers, pretended to an uncommon sanctity, and a more than ordinary strictness of Discipline. Their agitations, and extasies were very surprizing, and astonishing; and pass'd, with many weak, and well meaning Christians, for the operations of the Holy Spirit. But the *Gnosticks* were such a crew of

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(a) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 4. cap. 7.*

(b) *Theodoret. Fab. Heret. l. 1.*

(c) *Epiphan. Heres. 22.*

(d) *Contra. Cels. l. 1. p. 44.*

(e) *L. 6. p. 282.*

(f) *Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 6. cap. 37, 38. Origen. con. Cels. l. 6. p. 282.*

profligate

(g)  
29.

profligate debauchees, that no man of sobriety cou'd like them. And their Tenets were so extravagantly absurd, that no one cou'd possibly, for any long time, be impos'd upon by them, that had but a common share of understanding.

The causes of heresy, that were more peculiar to the first ages of the church (not to mention those that are common to all times, as ignorance, and a corruption of manners, passion, and prejudice, interest, and ambition, singularity, and ostentation) are these.

*First*, Many of the converts to Christianity came from the schools of the philosophers; who retaining a high veneration for their masters, were for blending their philosophical notions, with the truth of God. When a man change's his religion (which is commonly done with too much hast and precipitancy) he either runn's into an opposite extream, thinking he cannot get at too great a distance from that he dislikes; or he stopp's short, and is for compound-ing, and incorporating the old religion with the new. We have many instances of mistakes, and miscarriages of both kinds. The *Ebionites* and *Nazaraean* hereticks, were Jewish converts, that paid a mighty regard to the *Mosaick* institutions: they kept the Jewish sabbaoth, and strictly observ'd many legal rites and ceremonies (g), and seem'd desirous of being members at once both of the old

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(g) *Origen. Con. Cels. l. 5. p. 272. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. 3. c. 29.*

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covenant and the new. On the other hand there were some, that thought they cou'd not possibly fly too far from Judaism : they cou'd not think it allowable to imitate the Jews, in any thing whatever, since they were the *κυριοκτόνοι*, or murderers of the Lord of life. To celebrate the paschal solemnity, according to the Jewish computation, was reputed unlawful ; and a mighty pothor, and a fierce contention was rais'd on this account, between the Asiatick, and the western Churches.

Some of the gentile converts, out of an honest, but indiscreet zeal, and hatred against every thing, that was heathenish, condemn'd philosophy, as the invention of the devil ; and prohibited the reading of all prophane authors. But the numbers on the other hand, were infinitely greater, of those who were for grafting Christianity upon pagan Theology, and attempted to reconcile their darling philosophy, and poetical dreams, with the revealed will of God. We may trace the heathen poet, or philosopher, in many of those heretical fables, that were propagated in the primitive ages : and if a book on this subject, written by St. *Apollinaris*, the famous bishop of *Hierapolis*, had been extant at this day ; we shou'd have been able to have demonstrated, from what sect of Philosophy, every particular heresy drew its errors. As several of the first hereticks were well acquainted with the philosophical



phical sciences (*b*), so we learn from *Tertullian* (*i*), that heresy was the off-spring of philosophy; and came originally from the schools of *Aristotle*, *Plato*, *Epicurus*, and the *Stoicks*. *Marcion's* two original Beings, the one good, the other evil, is nothing but a piece of Stoicism. *Valentinus* intermix'd *Platonism* (*k*), with his heretical nonsense; and his *Cosmogony* is nothing but a poetical tale, badly told. *Basilides* enjoyn'd his scholars a five years silence, after the manner of *Pythagoras* (*l*): and the *Continentes* abstaining from the flesh of all animals, was probably, in imitation of that philosopher (*m*). The fables of the *Gnosticks* were borrow'd, as *Irenaeus* rightly observes (*n*), from the heathen poets, and more particularly from *Homer* (*o*).

Secondly, Persecution for righteousness sake, tho' it wonderfully contributed towards the propagation of the Christian faith, and settled it upon a firm, and lasting foundation; yet was it the occasion of some heretical errors in the first ages. When a man is in danger of losing his life for the

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(*b*) *Cerintus*. *Valentinus*. *Epiphanius*. *Tatianus*, &c.

(*i*) *Apol. cap. 47. Præscrip. adv. Heret. cap. 7.*

(*k*) *Tertull. Præscrip. adv. Heret. c. 7.*

(*l*) *Agrippa Castor. apud Euseb. H. Eccl. l. 4. c. 7.*

(*m*) *Ibid.*

(*n*) *Adv. Heres. l. 2. cap. 19.*

(*o*) *Ibid. l. 4. cap. 58.*

sake of his religion, frail human nature too often gets the ascendant, and makes him fashion his religion agreeably to his ease, his interest, and security. There goes a remarkable story (p) of one *Theodotus of Byzantium*, who being apprehended by the heathen persecutors, was brought under a necessity, of parting either with his life, or his religion. The love of life prevail'd, and the miserable wretch openly deny'd his Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Astonish'd of what he had done, he went to *Rome*, hoping to lie there conceal'd: but one of his acquaintance met with him, and charged him with his infamous apostasy. His answer was, he had not deny'd God, but man: and being ask'd what man, he reply'd, the man Jesus Christ. Thus to vindicate himself, he commenc'd a heretick; and purely with a design to extenuate his crime, he ever after maintain'd, that the Lord Jesus Christ was merely man. It was an avow'd principle amongst the primitive hereticks, that Martyrdom was a foolish and unnecessary thing, and not agreeable to the will of our holy Redeemer (q): but the true foundation of that pretended persuasion, was this: not one of them ever had the courage, or the constancy, to suffer for the truth. Tell them of their offering sacrifices to idols; and of their denying the faith, in time of

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(p) *Epiphan. adv. Hæres. l. 2. Tom. 1. p. 463.*

(q) *Vide Tertul. Scorpiac. adv. Gnostic.*

persecutions; their answer was, those things were matters of indifferency (r), and they were entirely at liberty, to act just as they pleas'd. Thus self-preservation was the parent of heresy, and to avoid a temporal inconvenience men run into errors.

Persecution in another respect was the cause of heresy. Repeated hardships and miseries turn'd the heads of some weaker Christians, and made them delirant, as in a fever. Melancholy retirement frequently gives birth to visions, and Enthusiasm; and a man by suffering much, and dwelling too long, upon the melancholy side of religion, may be seiz'd at last with a religious phrenzy. The Reveries of the *Montanists* look like the product of a melancholy, retir'd, and mortify'd way of life. The *Cathari*, or *Novatians*, who finally rejected the penitent *Lapfi* from communion, seem to have been a set of people, that were sower'd with sufferings, and were for reducing the Christian religion to a conformity with their own morose, and inflexible dispositions.

There has rarely happen'd any persecution in the Christian world, but a spirit of enthusiasm has immediately appear'd. At the beginning of the reformation, during the religious wars in *Germany*, there were swarms of Enthusiasts, who broach'd

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(r) *Agrip. Cassor. apud Euseb. H. Eccl. l. 4. c. 7. Origen. con. Cels. l. 6. p. 282.*



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such blasphemous opinions, as cou'd be the effect of nothing, but downright madness (1). We have lately observ'd, in a neighbouring nation, some Protestants *dragoon'd* into a sort of religious madness; who after they had endur'd many hardships, and had been depriv'd of their civil, and religious rights, pretended to prophecy, and inspiration. There were many of our own nation, who, to avoid the scandalous cruelties of Queen *Mary's* reign, fled into foreign countries. There they made many sorrowful reflections upon their own sufferings, and those of their countrymen; which whetted their resentments against Popery, that cruel and sanguinary religion, and gave them an irreconcilable aversion to every thing, that came from Rome. Hence they quarrell'd with the reformation made in King *Edward's* reign, as too nearly ally'd to the church of Rome. In this melancholy exile (2), they laid a plan for a separation, that has unhappily continu'd to this very day.

If we consider, what barbarous oppressions the first Christians met with: what manifold temptations they lay under to deny the faith: what obstinate prejudices were entail'd upon those, who came from the schools of the philosophers, into the Church of Christ; we need not be under any surprize, to find the primitive ages infected with

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(1) Vide *Sleidan. Commentar. de Stat. Relig.*

(2) *Heylin's Hist. of the Reformat. 2. Mary's Reign.*

heresy.

heresy. It is rather a matter of wonder, that the orthodox faith shou'd be able to keep its ground, when attack'd by so many secret, and open enemies: and that the sincere, and genuine Christians, shou'd almost as far outgoe the hereticks in numbers, as they did in the goodness of their cause. Our blessed Lord, and his Apostles expressly foretold, that there wou'd arise *false Christs, and false prophets*. That *some wou'd depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils*. And St. Paul declares to the *Corinthians*, *there must be heresies, that they which are approv'd, may be made manifest among you* (u).

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(u) 1 Cor. 11. 19.

## C H A P.



## C H A P. XI.

### *The charge of corrupting the Sibyllin Oracles accounted for.*

**W**HETHER the present eight books of Sibyllin Oracles are one entire piece of pious fraud, and the spurious production of some weak, or wicked Christian : or whether they contain the genuine predictions of the ancient Sibylls, with some corruptions and interpolations, is a controversy amongst the learned, not yet decided. *Celsus*, who flourish'd about the middle of the second century, is the first, that taxeth the Christians with interpolating the Sibyllin Oracles (a). The same charge was afterwards carried on by several others, as we learn from *Lactantius*, the Emperour *Constantine*, and *St. Austin* (b). Whoever will peruse the present collection of Sibyllin Oracles, with any tole-

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(a) *Origen. contra Cels. l. 7. p. 368, 9.*

(b) *Lactan. de vera Sapientia. l. 4. c. 15. Constantin. Orat. ad Sanctos. c. 19. Augustin. de Civit. Dei. l. 18. c. 46, 47.*



able attention, must meet with many evident marks of forgery ; so that I cannot forbear pitying the weakness, and credulity of those, who stily contend for the legitimacy, of the whole collection of those pretended Oracles.

We there find an account of the Creation of the world, the fall of our first parents, the ark of Noah, the deluge of waters (c), the tower of Babel, &c. all undoubtedly taken from the book of Genesis. The historical books of the new Testament have also furnished the forger of those Oracles, with several pretended prophecies concerning our saviour. The manner of our Lord's nativity, his life and actions, his tryal and sufferings, his resurrection and ascension, are describ'd with much plainness and particularity ; which makes it more than probable, that several of those Oracles, relating to our blessed Saviour, are not predictions of future events, but historical narrations of facts, that were already past, and gone. The author, in order to disguise the imposture, is something ænigmatical, in his account of the Roman Emperours (d). He describes them all, from *Julius* to *Adrian*, chiefly by the initial letter of their names. There is mention made of three successors to *Adri-*

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(c) The pretended Sibyl says (l. 1. p. 182. l. 3. p. 283.) she was wife to one of *Noah's* sons, and was with him in the ark.

(d) Vide l. 5.

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*an*, which has occasion'd a conjecture (*e*), that the present collection of Sibyllin Oracles was made in the reign of the *Antonine* family.

*Opsopæus*, the learned Editor of the Sibyllin Oracles has substantially prov'd (*f*), that many of them at least, were forg'd after our Lord's ascension. But he attempts, to set the original date of some of them too low: and his zeal to convict them of forgery, has led him into some mistakes. *Sibyl*, he tells us, asserts (*g*), that she had seen the second temple of *Vesta* consum'd by fire: and from thence we are to infer, that the author of the Sibyllin Oracles, liv'd after the year of our Lord 199; when, according to *Eusebius's* computation, that temple was burnt down. But *Fabricius* has corrected this mistake; and has prov'd (*h*), that it is not *Vesta's* second temple, burnt in the reign of *Commodus*; but the second temple at Jerusalem, destroy'd in *Vespasian's* time, that is mention'd in the Sibyllin verses. The author of them is charged by *Opsopæus*, with espousing one of *Origen's* heterodox notions, viz. that the torments of the damn'd shall not be eternal: and consequently is suppos'd, to be *Origen's* cotemporary, in the third century, if not later. Now the passage cited by

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(*e*) *Car. Hist. Lit. Pridaux, Connec. Vol. 2. l. 9.*

(*f*) *Præfat. & Not.*

(*g*) *L. 5. p. 332.*

(*h*) *Biblioth. Græc. Tom. 1. l. 1. c. 32. p. 209.*

*Opsopæus,*

*Opsopæus*, and upon which he produces a marginal remark from an old manuscript, does not, in my opinion, make good the charge. 'Tis said in that place (i), that Almighty God at the request of the righteous, shall deliver men from the consuming fire; by which we are to understand a sort of purgatorial fire, through which all men, whether good or bad, are to pass; and from which, the righteous alone shall be deliver'd, upon making their humble supplication to Almighty God. This interpretation will be confirm'd, if we look a little backward (k); where the pretended Sibyl declares thus: *All shall pass through a burning lake of unquenchable fire. All the righteous shall be sav'd, or deliver'd out of it; but the wicked shall be destroy'd in it, to all eternity.* This, I confess, is an odd, and extravagant notion: but it is either none of *Origen's*, or not peculiar to him, or to the times he liv'd in; and consequently does not prove, that the author of that passage, cited by *Opsopæus*, liv'd in the third century.

It is said in the fifth and eighth books of *Sibyllin Oracles* (l), that after *Adrian* three shall reign, that is *Antoninus Pius*, *Antoninus* the Philosopher, and *Lucius Verus*, and then shall be the end of all

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(i) *L. 2. p. 212. Paris. Edit. 1607.*

(k) Καὶ τότε δὴ πάντες διὰ αἰθομένῃ ποταμοῖο,  
καὶ πολλὰς ἀσείων δακρύσωνδ' ἔτι τε δίνουσι  
Πάντες σωθήσονται, ἀσεβεῖς δ' ἐπὶ τοῖσιν ὄλονται  
Εἰς Αἰῶνα. *Ολυσ. L. 2. p. 207.*

(l) *P. 304, 367.*



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things. From whence it is evident, that the author of those passages cou'd not be later than the reign of *M. Antoninus*, the last of the three above-mention'd Emperours. For, it wou'd be ridiculous, to suppose that the author shou'd fix the end, and consummation of all things, to the conclusion of *M. Antoninus's* reign, and tell us so, after the accomplishment of that period. How long those verses were written before the death of *M. Antoninus*, I cannot precisely tell: but if I may be allow'd to add one conjecture to many, that have been offer'd upon this head, I would suppose, this to be done sometime, between the death of *Lucius Verus*, and the death of *M. Antoninus*. For the pretended Sibyl tells us (*m*), the third and last of those three Emperours, that succeeded *Adrian*, shall have the whole sovereign power in his own hands, & late, that is *M. Antoninus* shall have partners in the Empire, for several years, and at last shall reign alone. This was true in fact: but how he came to the knowledge of this; or how he cou'd tell, whether *Marcus*, or *Lucius*, was the third, and last Emperour, I cannot concieve, without supposing, that he surviv'd *Lucius Verus Antoninus*. I therefore conclude, that the fifth, and eighth books of Sibyllin Oracles, or part of them at least, were

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(*m*) L. 5. p. 304.

written after the death of *Lucius*, and before the death of *M. Antoninus*, about the year of our Lord, 170.

It has been observ'd by a very learned, and eminent author, *that the present collection of Oracles was made, between the year of your Lord 138, and the year 167. It cou'd not be earlier, for therein mention is made of the next successor of Adrian, that is Antoninus Pius, who did not succeed him, till the year 138. And it cou'd not be later, because Justin Martyr in his writings, several times quotes it, and appeals to it, who did not out live the year 167 (n).*

This observation is built upon a supposition, that *Justin* had seen, and quoted that very collection of Sibyllin Oracles, we have at present; which is by no means probable. Some of *Justin's* quotations, I confess, agree with the present collection: nay further, it must be own'd that those pretended prophecies in our Sibyllin Oracles, relating to our Saviour, speak of him (in exact agreement with *Justin's* account of them) not in a typical allegorical way, but *plainly, and openly (o)*. But this is far from amounting to a proof, that the entire eight books of Sibyllin Oracles were extant in *Justin's* time; before the year of our Lord 167. For by this way of reasoning, we

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(n) *Prideaux. Connec. vol. 2. L. 9. p. 626.*

(o) *Justin. Cohortat. ad Græc.*

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might carry the date of them back as far as *Vespasian's* time ; because *Josephus* cites (p) a passage from the Sibyllin Oracles, the substance of which, we find in our present collection (q). The eight books of Sibyllin Oracles were undoubtedly patch'd up, and collected at different times, and by different hands : and as some of them are older than our Saviour's time, so there are others as late as the reign of the *Antonine* family ; and some parts of them much later still.

We can never suppose, that *Justin* took our present collection for the genuine predictions of the ancient Sibylls ; without taxing that holy and learned Martyr with weakness, ignorance, and credulity, to a great degree. Who can imagine, he shou'd call so gross an imposture, and recant a forgery, the production of his own times, the most ancient Oracles of the Sibylls, that were dispers'd all over the world (r) ? Besides, the Sibyllin Oracles, as cited by *Theophilus*, *Athenagoras*, and others, who wrote after *Justin*, were different from those we have at present : from whence I infer, that the collection now extant, was not seen, and appeal'd to by *Justin*. But further. The Acrostick in the eighth book, seem's to be of a more modern date, than most of the rest of those

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(p) *Antiq. Jud. l. 1. c. 5.*

(q) *Sibyll. Orac. l. 3. p. 223, 4.*

(r) *Justin. Cohortat. ad Græc.*

pretended



pretended Oracles. For, the Emperour *Constantine* in the fourth century, is the first, that mentions it. The initial letters in that Acrostick, make up the following words, *Ἰησοῦς. Χριστός. Θεοῦ υἱός. Σωτὴρ. Σταυρός.* *Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour, the Cross* (s). Here is a plain description of our blessed Lord, even by his very Name: which yet is not once taken notice of, for the first three hundred years. But the fathers of the second and third centuries, had that Acrostick been extant, and reputed genuine in their days, cou'd not have forgot to urge so express, and illustrious a testimony, in their disputes with the heathens.

Some are of opinion that *Tertullian* alludes (t) to this Acrostick, when he calls our Saviour *ἰχθύς*: which word is compos'd of the initial letters of these greek words, *Ἰησοῦς, Χριστός, Θεοῦ υἱός, Σωτὴρ.* *Jesus Christ, the son of God, the Saviour.* But what reason there is to suppose, that *Tertullian* refers to those Sibyllin verses, written in the Acrostick way, I cannot conceive. He does not once mention that Acrostick. Besides, the word *ἰχθύς* (which signifies a fish) is nothing but a trifling conceit, arising from a whimsical conjunction of five initial letters, taken from words that were

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(s) *Sibyll. Orac. l. 8. p. 380. Constantin. Orat. ad Sanctos. Cat. c. 19.*

(t) *Sed nos pisciculi secundum ἰχθύν nostrum Jesum Christum, in aqua nascimur. De Baptismo c. 1.*

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very common, and to be met with in ten thousand places, besides the eighth book of Sibyllin Oracles. *Lactantius*, who wrote about an hundred years after *Tertullian*, paid a great regard to the Sibyllin Oracles; and made frequent appeals to them; and yet as to this Acrostick he is perfectly silent. Nay he quotes (u) the eighth line in this Acrostick; but instead of εἰ-ψω-ν (*they shall throw down*) where the initial letter ε makes up the second letter in the word χεῖρ-ες; he sets down τε-ψω-ν (*they shall break to pieces*) which effectually spoils the Acrostick (w).

The Emperour *Constantine* stiffly contends for the great antiquity, and the genuine authority of this Acrostick (x). He calls in *Cicero*, as an impartial witness on his side: who in the opinion of most learned men, says nothing at all in his favour. The Acrostick mention'd by *Cicero*, was widely different (as *Dr. Prideaux* has (y) very rightly observ'd) from that which we find in the eighth book of Sibyllin Oracles. Besides *Cicero* tells us, that the Sibyl (or whoever else it was, that had a hand in the framing of that Oracle, which declar'd that the Romans must have a king, if they wou'd be safe) acted very cunningly in not

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(u) *L. 7. cap. 19.*

(w) *Vide Not. Opsop. in Sibyll. Orac. p. 65.*

(x) *Orat. ad Sanctior. cat. cap. 19.*

(y) *Connec. Part. 2. Book. 9. p. 628.*

naming of times, and persons (x): by which means the Oracle was capable of various, and uncertain interpretations; and was applicable to different purposes. But in our Sibyllin Acrostick, Jesus Christ, the son of God, is expressly nam'd: and in another place, the time is precisely fix'd for the coming of this great, and immortal King, viz. when Ægypt shall be added to the Roman Empire (a).

That several things contain'd in the present collection, were extant long before *Justin's* time, is evident enough. Among our Sibyllin Oracles, we find many passages, that agree with the writings of *Orpheus*, *Homer*, and some others of the ancient Greek Poets (b). But whether those Poets borrow'd from the Sibylls, or the pretended Sibylls from them, remains an uncertainty. *Herodotus* (c), *Strabo* (d), and others, cite some Greek verses, as from an ancient heathen Oracle, which we find at this day amongst our Sibyllin Oracles.

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(x) Hoc si est in libris, in quem hominem, & in quod tempus est? Callide enim qui illa composuit, perfecit, ut quodcunque accidisset, prædictum videretur, *hominum & temporum definitione sublata. De Divinat. l. 2.*

(a) Ἀντὶς ἐπεὶ Ρώμη καὶ Ἀργύρης βασιλεύσει,  
Εἰς ἐν δὴ θύνησα, τότε δὴ βασιλεία μερῶν  
Ἀθανάτου βασιλῆος ἐπ' ἀνθρώποις φανεῖται.

*Lib. 2. p. 219.*

(b) Vide *Fabric. Biblioth. Græc. l. 1. c. 33. p. 217.*

(c) *L. 1. c. 47. Vide Sibyll. Orac. l. 8. p. 392.*

(d) *Geograph. l. 1. p. 36. Vide Orac. Sibyll. l. 4. p. 292.*



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Many more instances of this kind might be produced, which make it evident, even to demonstration, that the entire eight books of Sibyllin Oracles now extant, cou'd not be the invention of some Christian impostor, or the forgery of the second century.

There has been an objection urg'd against the authority of the Sibyllin Oracles, which is taken from the silence of the Apostles. It is agreed that the heathens held the ancient Oracles of the Sibylls in high esteem: and if any in the Apostolick age had spoke of our blessed Saviour, in as strong, and exprefs terms, as ours do; their authority wou'd frequently have been urg'd with success, and they must have contributed very much towards the conversion of an infidel. But since the Apostles make no appeals to the Sibyllin Oracles, 'tis concluded that they had either no existence, or at least, no reputation or authority, in the Apostolick age.

But to this it is answer'd, *First*. The Epistles of St. Paul, and of the rest of the Apostles, are directed not to infidels, but to Christians (e): and consequently no such arguments are to be expected there, as were proper for the conversion of an unbeliever. Instead of dissuasives from heathenish idolatry, and superstition. Instead of proofs, that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah, taken from

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(e) *Montague's Acts and Monuments. c. 3. p. 209.*

Prophecy, and Miracles (which to an actual believer wou'd have been entirely superfluous) we find in the sacred writings, exhortations to righteousness and holyness: to a continuance in well-doing, and a perseverance in the faith. Cautions against error, and imposture: and rewards, and punishments propos'd, to encourage men to stand fast in the faith, and to keep them within the bounds of their duty. As to the Acts of the Apostles, they give us a short history of the first settlement of Christianity. But we are to observe, that the Apostles, when they first preach'd the Gospel, had to do chiefly with the Jews: who in all probability, were not to be won over by any appeals to the Sibyllin Oracles. Besides, the Acts of the Apostles contain in reality, little more than the Acts of St. *Paul*: nay the history of that great Apostle, given us by St. *Luke*, is very short, and defective. St. *Paul*, I confess, seems to have had a favourable opportunity (*f*), of citing the Sibyllin Oracles, in his dispute with the *Athenians*: but who can tell, what substantial reasons there might be for such an omission? Or might not the historian, for the sake of brevity, pass by such a citation, as well as omit several other particulars, relating to that dispute? Many things were said,

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(*f*) Vide *Vales. Annotat. in cap. 18. l. 5. Euseb. de vita Constant.*

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and many things written by the holy Apostles, which we have no account of. We know very little of the method they pursued : or of the arguments they urg'd in preaching the Gospel : which doubtless, they varied, according to the different capacities, and dispositions of the people, they were concern'd with. The silence therefore of the Apostles in this case, is far from being a proof, that they never appeal'd to the Sibyllin Oracles.

A second answer to the abovemention'd objection is this. 'Tis said, the Apostles in their preaching to the Gentiles, did actually refer them to the Sibyllin Oracles. *Clement of Alexandria*, a most learned Father, tells us (g), that Almighty God being willing, the Jews shou'd be sav'd, gave them prophets ; and also rais'd up from amongst the worthiest of the Greeks, prophets of their own. This he says evidently appears, not only from the preaching of *Peter* (a book of that name) but also from the words of *St. Paul*, who speaks thus. *Take the Greek books, consider how Sibyl speaks of One God, and of things which are to come. Take and read Hystaspes. You'll find he describes, more plainly and expressly, the son of God, and that opposition made against Christ by the Kings of the earth, who hate him, and all that bear his name.*

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(g) *Strom.* 6. c. 93 p. 761.

This



This quotation is taken from a book now lost, but extant in the time of *Clement of Alexandria*. The *Κήρυγμα Πέτρου*, the preaching of Peter, which Doctor Grabe supposeth (h), was joined to the preaching of Paul, was a book of no contemptible character; and was frequently cited by several very ancient fathers of the church. Notwithstanding some heretical interpolations, it contain'd several curious Apostolical remains. Whether or no the passage just mention'd, is of that kind, I cannot say. *Clement of Alexandria* declares for the affirmative; and we must allow him to be a witness of great significancy, whether we consider his learning, or the times that he liv'd in. Besides, there is no manner of improbability, in supposing that St. Peter, and St. Paul quoted the Sibyllin Oracles; when St. Clement of Rome, the companion of the Apostles, expressly did it, in his famous Epistle to the Corinthians (i). We do not

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(h) *Spicileg. Patr. Tom. 1. p. 66, 67. Vide Lactan. l. 4. cap. 21.*

(i) Εἰ τῆς παρέσης κατὰσσεως τὸ τέλος ἐστίν, ἢ διὰ τῆς πυρὸς κρίσεως τῶν ἀσεβῶν καὶ φασιν αἱ γραφαὶ προφητῶν καὶ Ἀποστόλων, ἔτι ὃ καὶ τῆς Σιβύλλης, καθὼς φησιν ὁ μακάριος Κλήμης ἐν τῇ πρὸς Κορινθίους Ἐπιστολῇ. *Quaest. 74. ad Orthodox. inter Op. Justin.*

Since this passage, concerning the end and consummation of all things, and the judgment of the wicked by fire, is pretty much of a piece with the following lines in Ovid; I cannot forbear thinking, that the Poet had his notion of the conflagration of the world from the Sibyllin Oracles.

Esse quoque in fatis reminiscitur affore tempus,  
Quo mare, quo tellus, correptaque regia Caeli  
Ardeat; & mundi moles operosa laboret.

*Metamorph. l. 1.*

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now meet with that quotation from the Sibyllin Oracles, in his Epistle : and the reason is this, There is but one manuscript copy of that Epistle, remaining in the world, as far as we know, and that imperfect ; but that the quotation was originally in *Clement's* Epistle, we have no reason to doubt (k).

It will perhaps be allow'd, that some of those Oracles, in the collection now extant, were not only prior to the incarnation of the Messiah, but were also cited in the Apostolick age : But there is started another difficult question, viz. whether any of those Oracles, that were indisputably prior to our Saviour's incarnation, did prædict the advent, or give any character, or description of the Messiah. The Oracles cited by *Herodotus*, *Strabo*, *St. Clement*, *Josephus*, and some others, are of a quite different nature : and even the quotation of *St. Paul*, in *Clement of Alexandria*, only informs us ; that the Sibyl spake of one God, and of things which were to happen afterwards ; without any express mention of the Messiah. In answer to this query let us observe.

First, We are inform'd by *Justin Martyr*, that the Sibyl foretold the coming of Jesus Christ ; and and spake of all those things that were to be done

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(k) Vide *Bevereg. Cod. Canon. vindicat. l. 1. c. 14. Sec. 8.*  
*Fabric. Biblioth. Græc. Tom. 1. l. 1. c. 33. Sec. 11.*

by him, σαφῶς, καὶ φανερώς, plainly and openly (l). I know 'tis objected, that *Justin's* copy of the Sibyllin Oracles, was a corrupt piece of forgery. But how does that appear? Is there any necessity to take the words σαφῶς, καὶ φανερώς, in such a latitude, as to make us believe, that in *Justin's* copy, the Messiah was describ'd with the same punctuality, and particularity, and all those circumstances relating to his actions and sufferings, as the author of our pseudo-Sibyllin Oracles describes him? If the ancient Sibyl said such things of a future Messiah, as were applicable to none but the person of the blessed Jesus, she describ'd him plainly, and openly. The quotations from the Sibyllin Oracles in *Justin*, have nothing in them, I will venture to affirm it, that looks modern, or supposititious. There the unity of the Godhead is asserted, and the idolatrous worship of the heathens is condemn'd: which is no more than has been done by *Orpheus*, *Sophocles*, *Plato*, and several more philosophers and poets, long before the coming of our Saviour (m). The book, wherein *Justin* speaks most fully and particularly of the Sibyllin Oracles, was probably one

(l) Σιβύλλη ———— καὶ δὲ τῆς τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμετέρας Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μελλούσης ἔσσεσθαι παρυσίας, καὶ καὶ πάντων ἡμῶν ἑνὸς γίνεσθαι μελλόντων, σαφῶς, καὶ φανερώς περιγραφεύσθαι.  
Cohortat. ad Græc.

(m) Clem. Alex. Cohortat. ad Græc. p. 62. 63. &c. Vide *Justin. Cohortat. ad Græc.*



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of his first performances after his conversion, and consequently written, pretty near the beginning of the second century. Now since *Justin* appeals to the Sibyllin Oracles as very ancient ; as very common in the world ; and to be met with in all the parts of it. Since no forgery whilst new can pass for genuin, and a considerable time is previously necessary to establish its reputation : I think it is evident, that the copy of the Sibyllin Oracles, referr'd to by *Justin*, must be at least as old, as the Apostolick age. And whether it was then forg'd ; in that purest and best age of Christianity, and even whilst the Apostles were living : or whether it be not very unfair, to entertain any suspicion of that kind, without any manner of evidence, I leave to the judgement of the candid, and impartial reader.

Secondly, the passage in *Clement of Alexandria*, cited from *St. Paul*, evidently implies, that the Sibyl foretold the coming of our Saviour : and if we cou'd but prove the passage to be genuine, it wou'd afford us a decisive argument, and be a direct, and full answer to the query propos'd. Take and read *Hystaspes* (says the author of that passage) and you'll find the son of God describ'd, *πολλῷ τηλαυγέστερον καὶ σαφέστερον*, that is much more manifestly and plainly, than Sibyl has done it : which necessarily implies that Sibyl had describ'd the son of God, tho' not in such express terms, as *Hystaspes*. When therefore it is said of Sibyl,

σηλοῖ

ἀλλοῖ — τὰ μέλλοντα ἔσονται, *she declares things which are to come*, the meaning is, *she speaks of a future Messiah (n).*

*Thirdly*, There was a general expectation of the Messiah, for some time before he came, which was founded on some ancient Oracles, or prophecies. What made the Jews engage in a war with the Romans, that prov'd their utter ruin, was, as *Josephus (o)* informs us, an ambiguous Oracle, concerning a king that was to arise out of *Judæa*, who was to be the governour of the whole world. Nor was the expectation of a great and mighty king, peculiar to the Jews. *Suetonius* tells us, *An ancient, and constant Opinion had passed currently all over the east; that the fates had decreed, that about that time, there shou'd arise out of Judæa, those who shou'd have the government of the world (p).* *Tacitus* says, *Many were firmly persuaded, that it was contain'd in the ancient sacerdotal books, that about that time the east should prevail, and that some shou'd arise out of Judæa, who shou'd have the government of the world (q).*

It is generally suppos'd, that this notion of a Messiah, or king of the Jews, who was to have

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(n) *Clem. Alex. Strom. 6. c. 5.*

(o) *De Bello Jud. l. 7. c. 31. Vide Sueton. in Vespas. c. 4.*

(p) *Ibid.*

(q) *Histor. l. 5.*

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the empire of the world, was deriv'd from the Jewish prophecies ; because the Jews were dispers'd all over the eastern countries ; were very industrious in gaining of proselytes, and talk'd very much (as it is reasonable to imagine) of their prophetick predictions, concerning the advent of their glorious king, the Messiah. But since the Jews commonly appear'd odious, silly, and contemptible creatures to the Gentiles, amongst whom they liv'd ; because they profess'd a quite different religion, and *deny'd those to be Gods, whom all Asia, and the world worshipp'd* : we cannot fairly suppose, that the Gentiles shou'd give much credit to any Jewish prophecies ; and consequently that expectation of a mighty king of Judæa, which prevail'd all over the east, must have some other foundation, besides the Jewish prophecies.

The *Magi*, or wise men, came from the east to worship our Saviour, as soon as he was born : but what was it that gave them information of his nativity ? why shou'd they conclude from the appearance of an unusual star, that the king of the Jews was born ? In the prophetick writings in the Old Testament, we find no account of that surprising Phænomenon, that accompanied our Lord's nativity : nor was there any thing of this nature in the Jewish prophecies, at the time when the son of God was incarnate : for, if any of the prophets had foretold the appearance of an extraordinary star, which was to point out, and hang  
over



over the place of our Lord's nativity ; the Jews must certainly have accompanied the wise men to *Bethlehem*, and wou'd themselves have ador'd their infant King, and Saviour. Some of the ancients were of opinion (r), that the *Magi* understood the meaning of the Star's appearance, by the assistance of *Balaam's* prophecy ; where it is said, *There shall come a star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall arise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, &c* (s). But this is undoubtedly a mistake ; for the words do not speak of a star, but of some eminent, and illustrious person, that was to spring from the loyns of Jacob. The wise men were warn'd of God in a Dream, that they shou'd not return to *Herod* : and perhaps it was by some such divine revelation, that they became acquainted with the birth of the Messiah : however it is evident, that those eastern *Magi* had some knowledge of the Messiah, or king of the Jews, that was not borrow'd from the prophetick writings amongst the Jews.

The Gentiles had prophets of their own, as *Clement of Alexandria* observes, who deliver'd many things of great importance, that were consistent with truth, and divine revelation. Since our blessed Lord was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of the people of

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(r) Vide *Iren.* l. 3. c. 9. *Tertul.* adv. *Marc.* c. 26.

(s) *Numb.* 24. 17.

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Israel, it pleased Almighty God to give the Gentiles some previous notices of a Messiah ; and frequently made the very enemies of his truth, the instruments of its propagation. *Balaam*, a diviner or soothsayer, and not a prophet of the Lord (t), foretold the coming of the Messiah. The devils themselves confess'd *that Jesus was the Son of God most high* (u). The Oracles of the devil were sometimes compell'd to bear testimony to the truth. *Justin Martyr* tells us, when one went to the Oracle, and enquir'd who were the most pious and religious men. He receiv'd for answer, the Hebrews ; who worship God, the self existent King (w). *Porphyry* also cites some Oracles, that mightily extol the Hebrews, for their wisdom, and knowledge of religion (x). The Oracle of *Apollo* confess'd, as we learn from *Porphyry*, that the God of Israel was the true God (y). We are inform'd by the same author, and several others, that many of those Oracles spake highly in commendation of our Saviour, and acknowledg'd him to be the Son of God (z). From these and such like oracular responses, as well as from some

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(t) Vide *Origen. Homil. 30. in Num.*

(u) *Luke 8. 28. Mark 5. 7.*

(w) *Cohortat. ad Græcos.*

(x) *Euseb. præparat. Evangel. l. 9. c. 10.*

(y) *Ibid.*

(z) *Euseb. Demonstrat. l. 3. c. 6. Augustin. de Civit. Dei. l. 19. c. 23. Niceph. Hist. l. 1.*

of the most ancient poets, and philosophers, many of those pretended Sibyllin Oracles have been borrow'd, that we meet with in our present collection.

What those Sibyllin Oracles were, that were purchas'd by *Tarquin*, or whence they came, we cannot tell. In this however we are certain; that they were of a quite different stamp from ours: and were calculated, as far as it appears, merely to serve the interest of heathenish superstition, and idolatry. About fourscore years before the birth of our Saviour, those ancient Oracles were burnt with the *Capitol*, where they were deposited: and the Roman senate, in order to repair the loss, sent Embassadors to *Samos*, *Ilium*, *Erythræ*, &c. (a); who return'd to Rome, with a new collection of Sibyllin Oracles. This collection was mightily increas'd in *Augustus's* time; who ordered a great many volumes of Oracles to the flames; and at the same time commanded, that all the Sibyllin Oracles that were then in private hands, shou'd be brought into the city *Prætor* under pain of death (b). But this was a command of little significancy. There were so many copies of those Sibyllin Oracles, and dispers'd in so many parts of the world; that it was an absolute impossibility to recover them all.

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(a) *Tacit. Annal. l. 6.*

(b) *Tacit. Annal. l. 6. Justin. Mart. Apol. 2.*



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Besides those that had them in their own possession, were desirous of keeping them : and since it was an easy matter to conceal them, they run little or no hazard by transgressing of *Cæsar's* commands. They afterwards fell into the hands of the Christians, who many times appeal'd to them in their disputes with the heathens ; and successfully urg'd their authority, in behalf of the Christian Religion.

The fourth eclogue of *Virgil* is suppos'd to contain a description of the Messiah, and of the happiness and prosperity of his kingdom, taken from the Sibyllin Oracles. This appears to be the more probable, since that eclogue was written at a time, when there were a great many copies of Sibyllin Oracles carried to Rome ; which *Virgil* might have the opportunity of perusing, at least before they were examin'd, and committed to the custody of the *Quindecimviri*. There are some, I know, who understand by the *Cumæum carmen*, mention'd by *Virgil*, not the verses of the Sibyl of *Cuma*, but *Hesiod's* Golden age : but this interpretation is forc'd, and unnatural ; and has nothing but bare conjecture to support it. The poet in that eclogue, has a design to paint the glories of *Augustus's* reign, and to compliment *Pollio* upon the birth of a son : but he builds upon the plan of the *Cumaan verse* ; and let his intentions be what they wou'd, his account of the birth of a great person, and of the happy times that were to ensue,

ensue, is much more applicable to the Messiah, than to *Pollio's* son, or any one else.

As to the Sibyllin Oracles being corrupted and interpolated by some Christians, I own the charge to be true : but I speak this only with regard to the collection now extant. For that the Sibyllin Oracles were interpolated by the Christians, so early as *Celsus's* time rests entirely upon his single evidence. But he has been so often convicted of falsity ; and has discover'd so much virulent malice and prejudice against the Christians, that very little, or no regard is to be paid to what he asserts. Besides he does not descend to particulars ; nor tell us of what kind those interpolations were. He says the Christians had inserted πολλά καὶ βλασφημία, *many and blasphemous things*. His meaning is perhaps, that the Sibyllin Oracles appeal'd to by the Christians, spake irreverently, and disrespectfully of the heathen Gods, and deny'd their reality, or existence : but if this be the sole foundation of the charge, he might have carried it a great deal further ; and have tax'd the primitive Christians with interpolating the writings, of some of the most ancient poets, and philosophers.

## CHAP.



## CHAP. XII.

### *The charge of worshipping a Cross accounted for.*

**S**INCE there is no manner of difficulty in accounting for the remaining Calumnies, I shall but just mention the original causes of them, before I dismiss my reader.

The primitive Christians were accus'd of worshipping a Cross, because they frequently made use of the sign of the Cross. Wherever they were, or whatever business they were about, they made the sign of the Cross upon their foreheads (a). The *Signaculum Crucis* was to them, a memorial of their blessed Saviour's sufferings; and a badge of their Christian profession. Besides, they found by experience, that unclean Spirits were cast out not only by the invocation of the holy name of Jesus, but by the sign of his passion (b). They also observ'd, that if a Christian happen'd to be present at the heathen sacrifices, and sign'd him-

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(a) *Tertul. de Corona Mil. c. 3.*

(b) *Lactant. l. 4. c. 27.*



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self with the sign of the Cross, tho' never so privately, the soothsayers or diviners cou'd make no discovery, by looking into the entrails of beasts (c). For these reasons, the primitive Christians not only made use of the sign of the Cross, but also had an honourable, and reverential esteem for it. But to say that they paid adoration to a Cross, is a base calumny and contrary to the expresse declarations of the primitive Christians (d).

*Tertullian* has assign'd the reasons (e), why the Christians were charg'd with worshipping the Sun. viz. their turning their faces towards the East in time of prayer (which was a very ancient, and early usage amongst the Christians) and their keeping their weekly festival upon the *dies Solis*, or Sunday.

The Christians were said to be the cause of all the signal calamities that befel mankind, *First*, because the heathens took them to be a most prophane, irreligious, and atheistical set of people. They thought their gods wou'd never suffer such capital wickedness to escape with impunity; but must pour down their hottest vengeance upon the world, for suffering such execrable monsters to live in it. Hence whenever there happen'd a pestilence,

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(c) *Ibid. de Morte Persecutor. c. 10.*

(d) *Cruces etiam nec colimus, nec optamus. Min. Fel. p. 284.*

(e) *Tertul. Apol. c. 16.*

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a famine, a deluge of waters, or any other extraordinary, and publick calamity, immediately it was the common cry, *Christianos ad Leones. Drag the Christians away to the Lyons.* Some of the Christian writers substantially prov'd (f), that the world was visited with as severe calamities, before the coming of our Saviour, as it was afterwards: but this was little credited, since the humour then prevail'd, as indeed it has done at all times, of extolling the happiness, and prosperity of past ages, and magnifying them beyond the present. Besides, *Secondly*, This charge was urg'd with the greater vehemence, because the infidels found their account in it. It gave them an opportunity of plundering, and destroying those whom they hated. Proclaim a man an enemy to mankind, and you take away all tenderness, and pity towards him, and have it in your power, to sacrifice him when you please.

As to the charge of an unfociable reservedness and taciturnity, it had this foundation. The Christians cou'd not with a safe conscience keep up an intimate acquaintance, and familiarity with the infidels, who were wholly given up to the grossest idolatry. Nor could they cultivate an open familiarity, without exposing themselves to

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(f) Vide *Oros. contra Pagan.*

many dangers, and temporal inconveniencies. This made them shun society, and choose a melancholy retirement: and tho' this was done for the preservation of their innocence, and the security of their lives, and fortunes; yet their enemies imputed it to ill nature and moroseness, and a hatred towards mankind.

That abominable and beastly charge of worshipping the Genitals of the priests, was evidently occasion'd thus. The Penitents, before they were re-admitted into the Church, us'd to kneel down before the priest (g); and with hearty humiliation and sorrow, confess their faults, and earnestly beg, that they might be no longer excluded from the society of the faithful. This had been observ'd by some wicked and malicious heathens; who took hold of the remotest hints, and the slightest appearances, in order to abuse, and calumniate the innocent Christians.

*Lastly.* The charge of obstinacy, and desperation, madness, and folly, was deriv'd from that invincible courage, and patience of the Christians, under all their sufferings, and persecutions for righteousness sake. To suffer the greatest torments, and even death it self, not only with patience, but with pleasure; when they might have

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(g) Vide *Tertul. de Penitent. c. 9.*



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liv'd at ease, and enjoy'd all the comforts and conveniencies of life, was, in the opinion of the heathens, the effect of some incurable phrenzy, and unaccountable infatuation.

F I N I S.



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